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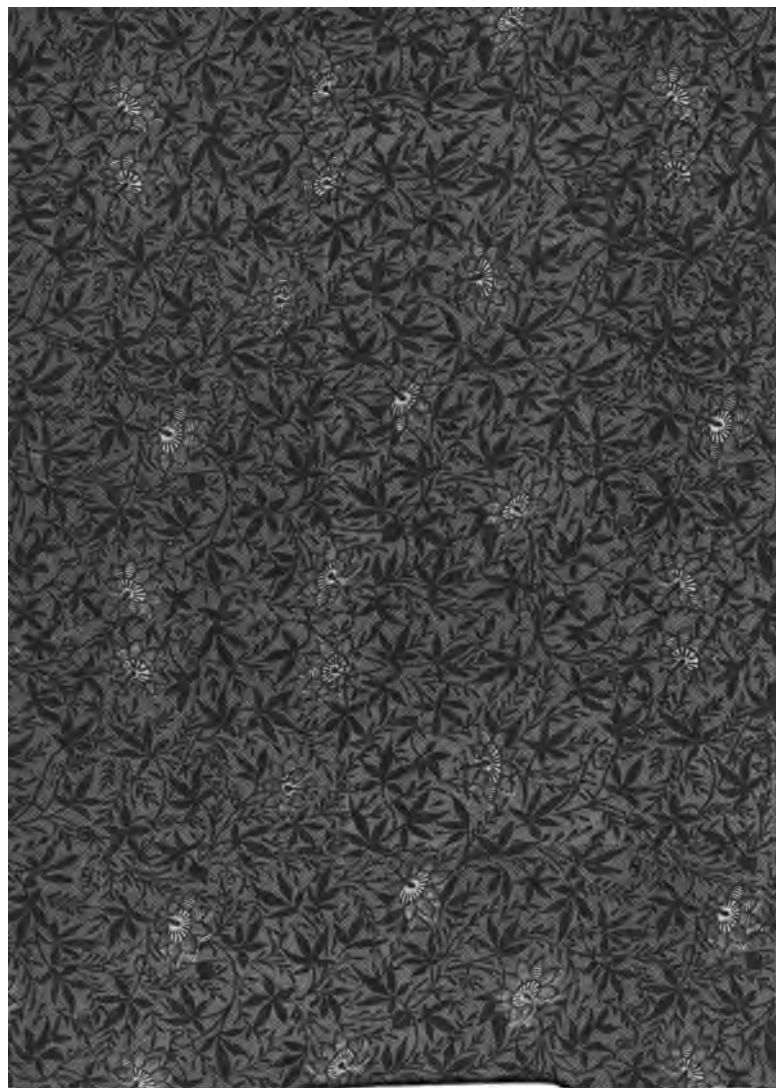
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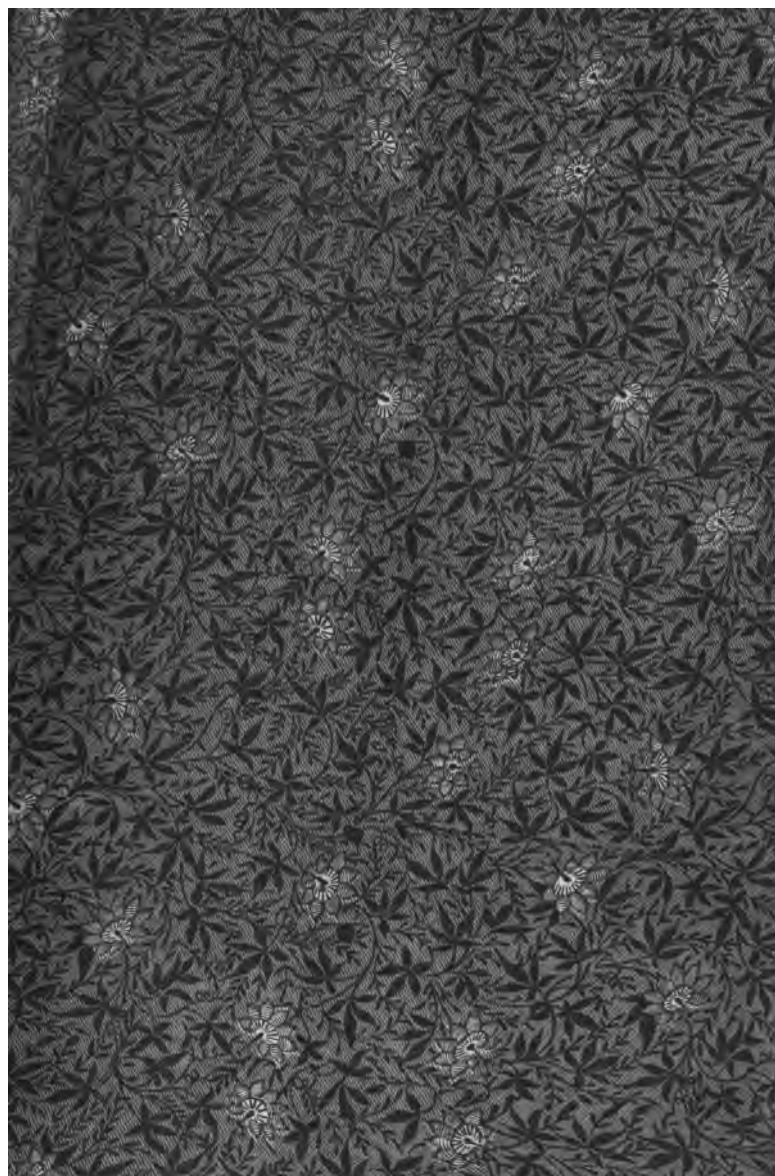


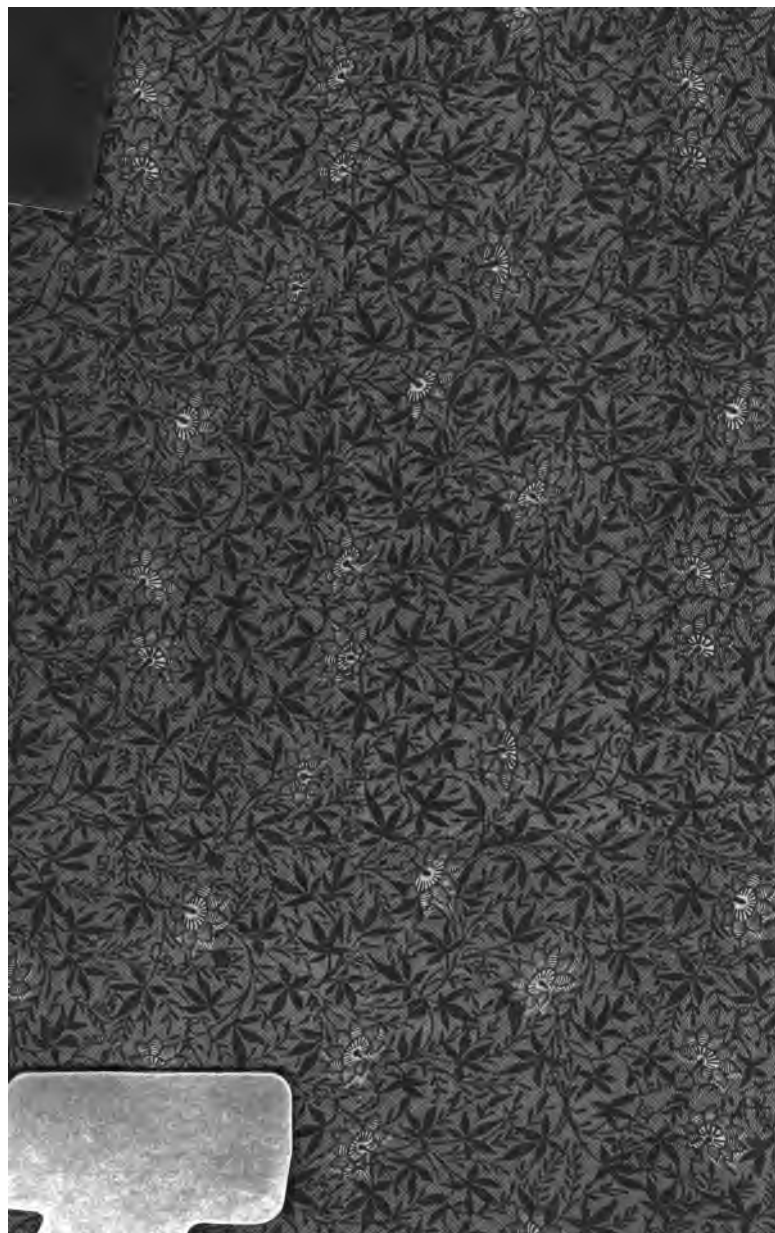
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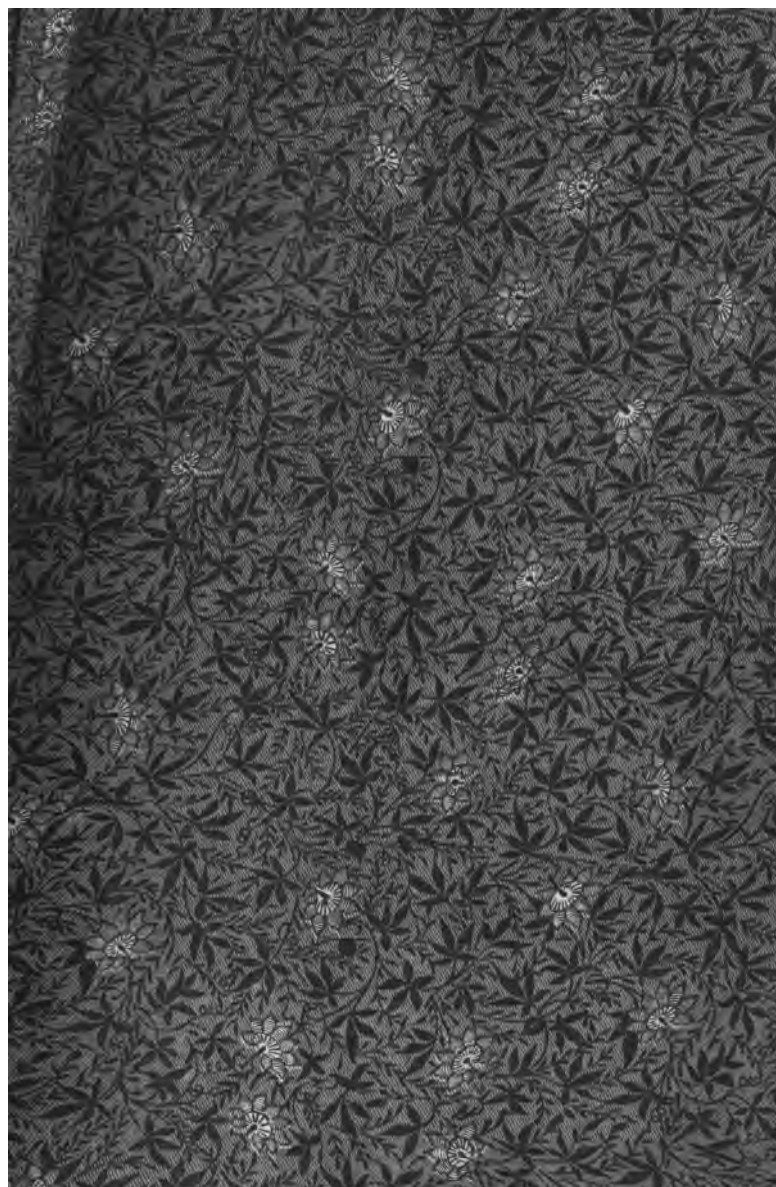
THE

LILIES











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AMONG THE LILIES.

LONDON: BURNS AND OATES.

AMONG THE LILIES

AND OTHER TALES;

WITH

A Sketch of the Holy House of
Nazareth and Loreto,

DRAWN FROM ANCIENT AND OTHER AUTHENTIC SOURCES.



BY

EMILY MARY SHAPCOTE,

TERTIARY OF ST. DOMINIC;

AUTHOR OF "LEGENDS OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT,"
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PRAYER OF ST. BERNARD TO THE SACRED MEMBERS OF
JESUS HANGING UPON THE CROSS."

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1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.

Among the Lilies.

AN ALLEGORY.

AMONG THE LILIES.



I.

"My Beloved is gone down into His garden to gather lilies."

I WAS wandering one evening through a country churchyard, when my step was arrested by a low wooden cross which headed an infant's grave. Being disposed for a little quiet meditation, I sat down by the side of the cross, upon which was written the legend, "My Beloved is gone down into His garden to gather lilies," and the inscription below was very simple: "M. A. S., fell asleep Passion Sunday, 1863, aged two months and six days."

The evening was very lovely, and the chirping of birds was dying away among the trees; so I read in the deepening twilight from my Breviary the Office of Matins, and

when I had finished the songs of the birds had ceased.

Then I thought of the babe lying so peacefully at my feet.

"To gather lilies!" I mused; "the early white blossoms upon which no blight has ever fallen, and with the dew of baptism still glistening on their foreheads! Sweet lilies," I thought; "happy lilies! gathered once for all to adorn the bridal of the Beloved!"

I paused. Then my soul continued to herself, and I sighed an involuntary sigh, "Why were we not all gathered then? Why could not we too have gone to the espousal of the Beloved without a stain upon our robes or a furrow upon our cheeks? Guardian angel, tell me!"

A whispered thought seemed to answer mine. It was thus:

"The brides of the Beloved have their cradles on the cross, for He loveth her best who suffereth most for love of Him."

"But," I urged, "loveth He not best that which is most pure and unsullied? Then how may suffering make up for the soil?"

"Suffering and love go hand in hand," replied my guardian angel: "the sufferings of Calvary and the love of the Bride."

A tear fell down my cheek whilst a great feeling of peace stole into my heart: then, closing my eyes, I repeated to myself again and yet again:

"The sufferings of Calvary and the love of the Bride."

I know not how long it had been that I slept, but when I awoke the sun had set, and the stars were rapidly filling the firmament: and I heard a sweet voice saying, "O all ye stars of heaven, bless ye the Lord!"

I was endeavouring to rise when the voice arrested me; and in my heart I answered, "*For ever and ever. Amen.*"

The voice went on: "O all ye sufferings and crosses, O ye sorrows and tears, bless ye the Lord."

And in my heart I bowed myself and replied, "Bless ye the Lord! Who can be compared to Thee, O Lord! and what beauty is like the beauty of Thy suffering face upon the Cross? Let my heart and my soul and

all my members bless Thee and praise Thee and adore Thee for ever."

And the voice echoed softly, "*For ever and ever. Amen.*"

And the stars grew brighter, and there seemed to be like the stirring of ten thousand myriad voices on the wind.

And I looked, and behold the air was full of glorious transparent beings, clothed with grace and beauty not to be expressed, and the sweetest strain of music that ever ravished mortal ear rose upon the air ; every leaf of every tree, every blade of grass, every shadowy beam of light was changed into animate being, with voices which rang through my heart and echoed back its pulses with glorious song.

"O all ye angels of the Lord, bless ye the Lord!"

And my soul cried out with gladness and exultation, "*For ever and ever. Amen.*"

And as I sang thus in my heart the firmament over my head seemed to open, and an infinite multitude of gracious beings, clothed with light, with crowns on their heads, and

having harps in their hands, filled the whole of heaven and earth with the sound of their music, and the music of their love, and the love of their human hearts, and it sounded in my hearing :

“ O ye spirits and souls of the just, bless ye the Lord ; O ye holy and humble of heart, bless ye the Lord ! ”

And my heart bowed down with reverent love and repeated, “ *Bless ye the Lord.* ”

Then, speaking inwardly to my guardian angel, I said, “ Who are these ? ”

And a thrill ran through my soul as I heard the words :

“ These are they who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ”

And my heart echoed, “ *In the blood of the Lamb.* ”

The song of jubilation died away upon the ear, and once again the refrain rang in my heart :

“ *The sufferings of Calvary and the love of the Bride !* ”

Then the angel said, "Child, come with me, and I will show thee how the Beloved comes into His garden to gather lilies."

And as he spoke I felt myself carried in his arms far, far away into the air, so that the churchyard faded from my eyes, together with the glorious vision of the Blessed, while the immortal sweetness of their ravishing music still echoed in my ear :

"Blessed be Thou, O Lord, in the firmament of heaven, and blessed and glorious and exalted over all for ever."

And my glad heart, in a transport of love, repeated, "*For ever and ever. Amen.*"

II.

I knew that I was borne along in the arms of my angel, although him I saw not ; I felt around me the strength of his embrace, and within me I heard the sweet music of his voice. I was at perfect rest.

"Whither go we, dear angel ?"

"We are going to see the Beloved gather lilies."

"But all is dark; and save for thy sweet stirrings, methinks I feel nothing around me that is good or holy."

"The souls of the righteous are in the hands of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In my arms, dear child, thou art safe."

"Sweet angel, I see lurid flames, and there are hissing voices in the air: whither takest thou me?"

"Patience, and thou shalt see."

"Dear angel, I smell a smell as of death and corruption, and the air I breathe is stifling me."

"Sin dwelleth in their habitation, and death preyeth upon their souls. What thou hearest and seest is but the invisible atmosphere of the world thou livest in every day."

"And yet I die not!"

"Thou hast the Life within, and he that eateth of the Bread of Life can never die. The Beloved knoweth His own! Now open thy eyes, dear child, and see."

And I looked. We were in a dimly-lighted

room, every portion of which denoted the extreme of poverty—a broken bedstead, a broken chair, dying embers in the grate, a squalid old man warming his hands over it. Restlessness and uncertainty in his eye bespoke the second childhood, and his low mutterings revealed a clouded soul.

“Why hast thou come hither, my angel?”

“Look again and thou shalt see.”

And I looked, and beheld over the chimney the crucified form of the Beloved. The force of habit drew the old man upon his knees. His rosary passed slowly through his fingers. The room became brighter, and I saw his guardian angel standing over him. His arm supported the old man, and his hand pointed to the crucifix. He whispered the words in his ear, and a smile broke over the old man’s face, as he repeated, “Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.”

And the angel drew his withered hands together and whispered words of peace.

“Jesus! Mary!”

The old man repeated the words and

his face was radiant with the light which fell from his angel.

The light grew ever brighter around. Young children with lilies in their hands, angels with lilies in their hands—a whole procession of glorious beings in white, thronged round—all carrying snow-white lilies. The guardian angel of the old man placed a fair blossom in his hand, and he was still kneeling as one expecting. The angel stoops and whispers. And the old man obediently answers :

“Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul.”

And as he spoke the Glorious Three appeared, and the child Jesus held out His hand and received the lily from His servant. The angel smoothed his scattered hair, and gently placed him on the broken bed, while the children waved their lilies round him, and he was hushed in sleep.

“Poor old man !” I exclaimed.

“Not *poor*, my child, but rich ! A sweet lily of the Beloved’s own choosing—a poor simple soul that has gone through life, doing what he knew, and knowing nothing but his

crucifix and his love for our Lady. He has outlived all he loved ; he has been supported by alms, and when old age and grief had taken from him even his gentle powers of thinking, his rosary was his companion, and his trust in the Mother of God his unfailing support. The Beloved hath come into His garden indeed, and gathered a snow-white lily. And I looked once more, and a golden light played round the glorified face of the dead, while sweet harmony filled the room :

“Ye humble of heart, bless ye the Lord ;”
and my heart echoed lovingly : “For ever.
Amen.”

And as the song died away a tremulous motion, as of thousands of wings of light, filled the air. I saw as in a dream, I heard as one asleep, yet every voice I heard, and every soft motion that I saw, seemed eternally to repeat the same untiring chant, which my own heart echoed back with the same untiring love : “*Bless ye the Lord.*”

III.

It was midnight, and the lights of the sanctuary burned brightly. The Religious stood upright in the choir, chanting the praises of God, and the sound of their voices trembled through the aisles of the great Priory Church.

But above the murmur of human voices, and brighter far than the light which filled the sanctuary, there appeared a vision of beauty, such as only the pure in heart may comprehend.

The Queen of Angels, bearing her Divine Babe, sat on her throne on high, and her sons the Apostles stood on either side. Seraphim, Cherubim, and Thrones all flashing with the fire of divine love, with outstretched wings filled up the heavenly ranks, and sang in harmony with the chant of earth, though the song from below was a plaintive strain, while that of heaven thrilled with triumph and joy.

Clouds of purest incense arose from the lips of each white-robed friar who stood in the choir below, and it hung in graceful cloud-

wreaths round about the feet of the Mother of God.

"Angel," I whispered, "what means this? methinks I could die for love!"

"This," replied my guardian, "is one of the holy furnaces of divine charity, in which the fire of love is kindled and kept alive on the face of the earth. These are the earthly resting-places of Jesus and Mary, and their best-loved homes."

When I looked again, I saw that the gracious Infant held His little hand over the bowed form of His beloved ones, and blessed them.

And music filled the air. It was pure, inexpressible harmony, like the perfect blending of many voices without confusion and yet without melody. Each voice was a perfect whole, and the whole together was the perfection of each. It swelled into vaster and vaster proportions, until the sound reached the farthest end of the universe. Yet as I listened I heard simply the words:

"*Laudate Dominum in sanctis ejus, laudate eum in firmamento virtutis ejus: omnis spiritus laudet Dominum.*"

"O praise the Lord in His saints, praise Him in the firmament of His power: let every spirit praise the Lord."

My heart seemed to swell within me: it struggled to go forth and mingle with the universal song: but my angel guide restrained me.

"Wait awhile, dear child, these strains are not for thee. They are gathered only from among the lilies."

"What meanest thou, dear angel?" I said, as I felt my soul held within bounds which it could not pass.

"Look, and thou shalt see."

And when I looked, behold, in each of the places where I had seen the white-robed sons of Mary, was one pure, fair lily; and from the lilies there distilled a perfume which fell in drops of transparent crystal upon the feet of the Mother of God.

Then the ministering angels gathered up these drops in crystal vessels, and carried them to the treasure-house of the Church.

The whole atmosphere then seemed to be pervaded with sweet perfumes, each distinct

in its odour, but forming in union with the others a perfect fragrance, which penetrated to the uttermost parts of the earth, carrying with it divine grace wherever it went ; and I felt in my heart a languishing and a longing which only my angel knew.

“ O my angel ! ” I sighed ; “ oh that I might die of love ! ”

“ Patience, dear soul,” said he, but he seemed to draw me yet closer within his gracious embrace ; “ the Beloved is coming forth into His garden to gather lilies.”

“ And is this the lily garden of my Beloved ? ” I cried in my soul. “ Oh then, that I were a lily therein, and that He would vouchsafe to gather me.”

Then the celestial music burst forth again, fresh incense rose in perfumed clouds, and once more the swelling chorus of human voices filled the air. For the white-robed sons of Mary had arisen, each with his fair lily in his hand, and was mingling his voice in the sweet melody of praise, “ *Salve Regina.* ” And the music entered deep into my soul, hushing up even its transport of love, as,

whispering to my angel, I said, "See, dear guardian of my soul, the Mother of God standeth in their midst."

Then did the white-robed sons of God's Mother hold forth their lilies to offer them at her feet, and the Divine Babe stretched forth His hand and took one from the hand of him who presented it to Him.

The choir was deserted, the white-robed procession had filed away, when an aged form returned and prostrated himself in silent prayer.

"His was the flower chosen by the Lord of the lilies," softly whispered the angel to me, "and his pure soul is even now about to pass away with it to the paradise of delight."

Once again I heard the song of prayer and thanksgiving arise through the midnight air, and by the fluttering of angelic wings I knew that the spirits of heaven were keeping their watch around the holy dead, and in the depth of my soul I heard the echo of their glorious song—" *Let every spirit praise the Lord.*"

IV.

Once more I felt myself carried in the arms of my angel guide ; and again I was conscious of passing through the tainted mid-night air.

“How is it thou dost bear me so easily, dear angel? In thine arms I seem to be like an infant asleep.”

“Thou resistest not,” was his reply. “Thy will is one with that which guides thee, and this giveth the power.”

“Couldst thou not act without my consent?”

“In nothing, dear child, that regards the interior; that which I do for thee now is such.”

“Am I not in the body, my angel?”

“Whether in the body or out of the body, God alone knoweth; question not such matters, they are too high for thee. We go to see the Beloved, my child, and to visit the gardens where His lilies grow: let it satisfy thee.”

"What fragrance is this? where are we now, dear angel?" I inquired.

"Look and see."

And when I opened my eyes, I saw that we were in a sickroom. It was richly but simply furnished, and all the draperies were pure white. The clock on the mantelshelf pointed to an hour past midnight, and the glowing embers shed a warm light over the room.

The walls were hung with sacred subjects, and over the crucifix was to be seen a picture of our Lady of Dolours, and the dear Mother seemed truly to look down upon us through her holy tears, and to be bearing in her heart all the sorrows of all her children throughout the world.

"What seest thou?" asked my guide.

I looked again, and I replied: "I see a very sick girl propped up with pillows, sitting in a chair by the hearth."

"Is that all, my child? Look again."

And I looked yet again, and behold there was a light so dazzling in the chamber that it absorbed everything else.

"I see light," I replied : "a light that absorbs everything."

"Wait awhile, my child, and look on."

And as I looked I felt an inward throbbing at my heart, and then as though my pulses stood still, and in the great joy of that light my soul swooned away.

The angel touched my heart and my eyes, and I was strengthened to look yet again.

In the light I perceived the sick girl, but as a vision within a vision ; her bodily sufferings were very great, but her soul was all absorbed in light, and she neither moved nor spoke.

Another form of brightness became visible within that transplendent light, and I saw her guardian angel by her side. He appeared to be supporting her, and it seemed as if her head lay upon his breast.

A whisper ran through her soul.

"I have loved thee with an everlasting love."

Then a bright smile overspread the features of the dying girl.

"O my Beloved !" she murmured, "I desire

that none of my love should be spent on any but Thee. Jesus, my God, Thou art my first, Thou art my last. Come, my Beloved, come! Oh let me die for love of Thee, who hast died for love of me!"

And now I could see the angels ascending and descending, with lilies in their hands.

Then the door of the chamber opened suddenly, and a very beautiful girl dressed in fine lace, with trinkets on her hands and neck, entered. Her hair was drawn back with a wreath of mock flowers, and there was a flush on her cheek. Dark beings followed her, who were not children of the light, but close to her side stood her guardian angel, and he looked very sad.

The lovely girl approached quietly and threw herself at her sister's feet.

"Darling, you are worse!"

"Rather say better, dear Lilian. I am feeling so bright, so well, so happy!"

"And why not gone to rest, Agatha? You look so tired."

"Oh, not tired—so refreshed, Lilian, if you

only knew ! But I wished to have one more sight of you, dear, in your ball-dress. Have they not admired you ? have you not been happy ? ”

Lilian covered her face with her hands and shook her head.

“ Not happy, Lilian ! and you went away so radiant, so sure of a triumph. ”

Agatha stooped over her sister tenderly ; and I could see that the guardian angel stooped over her too.

Lilian raised her head, while the tears flowed down her flushed face.

“ I have such a pain *here*, Agatha, ” and she laid her small hand upon her heart ; “ it is all plain to me at last. I am vain and frivolous. I have had the triumph, but something ever whispers to me, ‘ What will it profit ? ’ ”

Her angel drew closer to her.

“ There ! ” she exclaimed, pressing her heart ; “ there it is again ; deep, deep in my heart ; and I cannot answer it. But why, then, was I *made* beautiful ? ”

Agatha laid her thin fingers caressingly

upon the head of her young sister, and said in a low voice—

“That you might have something to sacrifice and mortify for the love of Him who is all beauty.”

The dark beings drew back as with affright, while a thrill of light brightened the form of her guardian angel.

“Sister,” said she, “I feel that there *must* be a change for me. I never felt like this before. Look at these rings and bracelets! what baubles they appear when I am here looking at your dear sweet face!”

I looked at them too. It was the light which surrounded Agatha—the light of Uncreated Truth—which shone upon those things, and she saw them at their true value.

Now as she spoke three glorious beings of pure light entered the room, bearing resplendent jewels, and as they approached the young girl, she said—

“I will never wear these wretched things any more; for your sake, Agatha, I will never wear them again!” and she took them from her hands, and her arms, and her neck,

and knelt at her feet all bathed in tears. She took the crown of false flowers from her hair, which fell in golden masses round her weeping face, looking like a promise of a bright aureola in the future.

“Say not for my sake, Lilian ; but for His who hath loved thee with an everlasting love !”

Now the glorious beings whom I saw held the jewels toward her.

“I have sinned, Agatha ! I have made an idol of my beauty, and the flattery of men my reward. I see myself as I am ! O Agatha, I am worse than nothing ! I am a miserable object, unfit for His love ! I have known the right way and not followed it ; I have loved the wrong way and I have taken it. O Agatha, pray for me, for I have wasted His gifts, and am no more worthy to be His child !”

Then did one of the glorious beings place on her neck the chain of true contrition.

“And, O Agatha !” she continued, “I am all, all unworthy ! unworthy to be your sister ! how much more to be His bride !”

And another glorious being encircled her waist with the golden girdle of humility.

"And, O my sister!" she exclaimed, while her voice was broken with tears and sobs, "what *shall* I do! I who have loved myself and not God! who have lived in myself and not in Him! who have sought creatures and the love of creatures, and given my heart to creatures, and never sought Him as you have done, for Himself alone! O sister! my heart is breaking, for I see Him, *Him!* Agatha! and oh that I might die for sorrow for ever having offended Him."

And a third glorious being placed a crown of pure white lilies on her head; and she was crowned with a crown of holy love!

"Who are these?" I murmured.

"These are of the angelic choir of thrones who bear the gifts of the Holy Ghost to the children of men. Happy, my child, are they who accept each gift as it is offered them, for they shall receive grace for grace, and an exceeding great reward."

The room grew ever more and more dazz-

ling ; I could dimly see the sisters in the glory which shrouded them. Young children and maidens, with their arms full of lilies and crowned with lilies, moved in and out in the midst of the light.

Agatha's lips trembled ; her guardian whispered in her ear : "He hath loved thee with an *everlasting love* !" Her face became illuminated with unearthly beauty, and in an ecstasy she exclaimed—

"Come, my Beloved, come !"

I saw each guardian had a lily in his hand, as Lilian stretched out her arms, exclaiming in an agony of contrition ; "O Love, I have sinned ! O Love, pardon !"

And in the midst of the light appeared the Beloved, wearing a crown of thorns.

But He came and took both the lilies from the hand of their guardian angels.

A low soft music echoed through the still midnight air, for the angels of God were chanting the immortal strains of thanksgiving, not only for her who had died in an ecstasy of love, but even for her also who had died in a state of perfect contrition.

"Let us bless the Father, and the Son,
with the Holy Ghost!"

And my heart responded with its every
pulsation, "*For ever and ever. Amen.*"

V.

"Dear angel, I feel the cold breath of a
wintry wind upon my face, and a damp
moisture which chills me to the heart.
Whither go we?"

For we seemed to be descending through
dark places between mildewed walls, whilst
the suffocating stench of a foul atmosphere
pervaded the place.

"We pass by the homes of the rich who
love not God, my child."

"Whence this cold chill? Their homes
are surely free from all discomfort like this!"

"What thou seest and feelest, my child, is
spiritual. The homes of the great are spirit-
ually cold, because the fire of divine charity
penetrates not therein."

"Wherefore not, dear angel?"

"Nothing more surely hinders the love of

God than the luxury of riches; nothing, my child, unless it be the commonplace comforts of home."

"Why must it be so?"

"Because creatures like these insensibly weave themselves into the wants of life; and when creatures become necessary, then the soul leans on them, and falls from Divine Love."

"Should we give up the comforts of home, dear angel?"

"Child," replied my guardian, "he who aspires to the love of God must be ready to part with everything that threatens to hinder it."

"But that *is perfection*, is it not?"

"Who was it said, 'Be ye perfect as my Father in heaven is perfect'?"

"Did He not speak to chosen ones?"

"Ask thine own soul, my child: wouldst thou be content to be one who is *not* chosen?"

"Dear angel, bear with me. Are there not degrees?"

"Did the Beloved suffer less for one than

for another? Who shall limit his own vocation, when the Beloved limits it not. Who that loves at all will not desire to love entirely?"

"Ah, my angel, would that He might call *me!*"

"Hath He not?"

A thrill went through my soul, for I knew my guardian spoke the truth.

We now seemed to stop, and the angel bade me look.

"I see á dark river, and a low archway appears to lead towards it."

"And nothing else?"

I looked again, and I perceived a brightness. It took shape, and I saw it was an angel.

"Who lies there?" I asked.

We approached. It was the form of a poor ragged boy; he lay almost without motion, and his heavy breathing bespoke a speedy release from pain.

Another angel passed swiftly by; rain began to fall; a strange man, closely enveloped in a warm cloak, turned aside to

avoid it ; entering the archway he perceived the child.

He stooped over him and spoke ; the child looked up wearily ; he was dying.

The two guardian angels stood by ; one of them carried a snow-white lily.

“What can I do for you, my lad ?” said the stranger, kindly.

“Nothing, sir, if it warn’t the priest. I feel as how it can’t be long, sir ; and mother—she’s in heaven.”

The good man took off his coat and covered the shivering form of the dying boy. The next moment he was himself in the midst of the rain.

The dark archway was now filling with celestial light ; a guard of angels stood round the child, while one brighter than the rest kept at bay a whole legion of dark-visaged evil ones who lurked around.

“Who is he, dear angel ?” I inquired.

“That is St. Michael, the Prince of the Archangels. He is the boy’s patron saint,” replied my guardian. “Now look again.”

I obeyed, and behold ! many devils came

forward and demanded the soul of the boy.

"He has stolen," said one.

"He has neglected Mass," said another.

"He has lied," said a third.

"I know it," said the boy, "I know it! I know I did it, but I was starving, and then I was sent to prison, and I was beaten! But O Jesus and Mary, forgive me, and send the priest to me before I die! O Mother in heaven, pray for your poor dying child!"

The angels with flaming swords kept the fiends at bay; the guardian angel of the child whispered in his heart—

"Our Father!"

"Our Father!" he repeated.

"Hail, Mary!"

"Hail, Mary!" he echoed, as he felt in his bosom for the worn and blackened beads; he tried to say more, but his speech was failing him.

The angel encouraged him.

"Dear Jesus," he whispered.

"Dear Jesus!" the child said in his heart.

"He died for me," whispered the angel.

"He died for me!" thought the boy.

"He loves me, or He wouldn't have done it."

"He loves me, or He wouldn't have done it," murmured the boy.

"I deserve to be punished, for I haven't loved Him," said the angel.

"I deserve to be punished, for I haven't loved Him so," said the boy.

"I am very, *very* sorry," whispered the angel.

"Oh, yes! I am very, *very* sorry for having offended Thee, dear Jesus. I will never, *never* offend Thee more!"

A soft sound of music trembled through the air as the child murmured thus. The demons hovered near, but could not touch the soul of the penitent boy whilst the flashing sword of St. Michael was lifted against them.

"Will the priest be in time?" thought I.

"He will," whispered my angel.

And at that moment, even, the priest appeared, in company with the good stranger.

The child smiled a wan but sweet smile as the priest knelt beside him.

Then I saw the crowd of angels gather around. I saw the air full of flashing light. I saw the demons fly with rage and fury. And then I saw—yes, I saw the Beloved approach, as a fair young boy led by the hand of His Mother; and He took the boy's lily from the angel's hands.

Then did the angels in heaven and on earth rejoice, and sing glad hymns of joy as the child closed his weary eyes in the sleep of death, and his soul rose up in the arms of his faithful guardian to the mercy-seat of heaven.

And wafted on the wings of the morning I heard the words of their song :

“O praise the Lord in the firmament of His power, O praise Him in the multitude of His greatness!” And my spirit answered in sweet jubilation :

“Omnis spiritus laudet Dominum.”

I spoke so loud that with the effort I seemed to slip out of the embrace of my guardian angel; a strange numbness came over me; a giddiness appeared to have taken

possession of my brain. Thousands of sweet sounds and wondrously refreshing perfumes filled the air, and stirred in the morning breeze. I opened my eyes, and before me stood the little wooden cross with its tender legend:

"My Beloved is gone into His garden to gather lilies."

It was morning ; the sun was already high in the heavens. My dear guardian angel had beguiled me through the night, and another morning had broke.

And it broke for me with a purpose, and a firm resolve. I had long trifled with my vocation. I would trifle no longer. My angel's words rang in my ear: "*Who that loves at all will not desire to love entirely !*"

I saw it now : the little comforts of home, the smiles of friends, the love of independence, these were my creature hindrances ; they shall be hindrances no more. They shall be given up, at once and for all. So I walked through the early morning and over the dewy fields, in sweet converse with my heavenly guide, until I came to the Priory

Church. I entered it, and my vocation was decided.

"O all ye priests of the Lord, bless the Lord; praise Him and exalt Him above all for ever; let every spirit praise the Lord!"



Marianna ; or, The Fairy Child.

AN ALLEGORY.



MARIANNA;

OR,

THE FAIRY CHILD.



I.

ONCE upon a time, a long while ago, there was a little child called Marianna.

Now Marianna lived with an old gipsy woman who was said to be her grandmother, and their dwelling was a small hut on the border of a great forest.

There was no other house near, nor habitation of any kind. The nearest village was miles and miles away ; only just beneath the brow of the hill, which hid the far-off landscape from view, was a rude little cell where dwelt the holy hermit Dominicus.

Marianna was a very fair child with long golden hair, and blue eyes which always

seemed full of pure, bright, happy thoughts. It had been said she was a stolen child, so fair and unlike a gipsy was she ; but it was never known who she was nor where she had come from.

But very lovely was she in her short brown skirt and tight blue bodice, with her golden hair floating away in the wind. Yet there was no one to tell her she was pretty, and Marianna never knew what it was to be vain.

She was a good child too, but she did not know it, nor yet about Him who had made this world of beauty.

So she sported with the flowers, and sang her little songs, and lived in sweet obedience to the strange old woman who called her grandchild. And so Marianna grew till she was seven years old.

II.

One day little Marianna ran out to play as usual on the borders of the forest. It was the sweet spring-tide, and she gathered violets and bluebells, and made a wreath for her

hair. When she looked up she saw an old man slowly drawing near; his eyes were bent upon his book, but his calm, noble face riveted the child's attention.

When he saw Marianna looking up at him with childlike simplicity and reverence, he stood still.

"What is thy name, little maid?" said he.

"My name is Marianna," she replied in a soft, timid voice, and with wonder-speaking eyes.

"The prayers of little children are very pleasing to the great and good God. Pray for me, Marianna."

And the stranger passed on his way.

Marianna did not move. The words, and the voice, and the sweet holy smile had penetrated her young heart. She knew not the meaning of those words, but her soul seemed to follow the retreating form of the stranger, and when she could see him no longer she burst into tears.

"O great and good God!" exclaimed she, "teach me to pray, that I may pray for him!"

And when the prayer had passed her lips, though she knew not that it was a prayer, her tears dried up, and an untold joy filled the soul of the little maiden.

And the child's life was changed. The flowers and the sunshine no longer attracted her eyes. Her soul had awakened, and it yearned for something beyond. For in her heart had welled up the fountains of a child's holy love.

But she had no one to speak to, and so she spoke to the flowers, and said :

“ Dear little flowers, who *is* the great God that I may go to Him, and what must I do that I may pray to Him ? ”

And the flowers looked up to the sky, and opened their petals wide ; but their language she did not understand.

Then she called to the birds, and said :

“ Dear birds, where is the great God that I may find Him, and what is it I must do that I may pray to Him ? ”

And the birds fluttered from bough to bough, and flapped their wings joyously, and they carolled forth a glad song amidst the

shady foliage of the woods. But the meaning of their language Marianna did not understand.

Then she turned to the sunshine, and asked it the same question.

And the sunshine came out from behind a dark cloud and decked it with gold, and it flooded all the landscape with heavenly glory.

But Marianna could not understand ; and her little heart fluttered plaintively, while a sigh escaped her lips.

“ O stranger dear, come back ! Come back and teach me where I shall find God, that I may go to Him and learn how to pray ! ”

And the light in her eyes grew brighter, and her step grew quicker, and day by day she sat on her bed of moss looking far into the valley, waiting until the old man should come again. Every day she gathered a knot of sweet violets, that she might give them to him as an offering of her childish love.

So the days went by, and at last he came. She sat there with her violets in her hand,

but her head had fallen on its mossy pillow, and she was asleep.

The holy hermit Dominicus had come out for his evening meditation, when he saw the child as she lay sleeping in the moss.

He stopped, and looked tenderly upon her. "Beautiful childhood !" he whispered softly, "more beautiful still the unstained soul within ! Sweet little one, how God must love thee !"

Then he knelt down, and prayed that his own heart might be found at last as innocent and guileless as the child's. But the violets he took from her little hand, and placed them in his bosom.

And when Marianna awoke from her sleep the moon had arisen, and her flowers were gone.

III.

"O that I could find him !" said the child, and wept.

For the days had come and gone, and the summer sun now shone ; but Marianna had never yet had her question answered.

Then a sudden thought broke in upon her. She dried her tears as she rose, looked round timidly, and set forth to seek the stranger. "I will go," said she, "and find *him* first, and he will tell me what I must do."

So she wandered on and on till her feet were weary, but she heeded not. The sun poured his hot rays upon her from his seat high in the heavens, but she feared them not. On, on she went towards the brow of the hill, seeking the only one who could teach her how the wants of her young heart were to be satisfied.

But the little feet at last refused to carry her any further, and Marianna now felt that she had lost her way. She sat down, and clasping her hands across her breast, she murmured again, "O great and good God, teach me to pray !"

As she spoke she raised her eyes, and saw the holy man whom she had searched for approaching. He smiled, as she had seen him do before, and stood before her.

"What ails thee, Marianna ?" said he, "and what has brought thee so far from home ?"

"Oh, tell me!" she cried, lifting up her hands to him, the tears streaming down her face; "tell me where I may find Him!"

"Whom seekest thou, my child?"

"The great and good God, that I may pray to Him."

The holy man paused in silent wonder; then, laying his hands upon her head, he said slowly and softly:

"Child, He is everywhere; but He loves best to dwell in hearts that love Him. Look for Him *there*, and you will find Him!

IV.

So Marianna returned to her cottage home, and was happy, for the stranger had spoken sweet words, albeit she understood them not.

She played amongst the birds and the flowers, and a new beauty seemed over all.

"O sweet little flowers," cried she, "the great and good God loves you, for He is with you everywhere. It is He that makes you beautiful and sweet. Oh, that I were a flower, that I might be as happy as you!"

And the little flowers moved more gaily, and shed their perfume more abundantly; and thus they spoke all day long to the child of Him who dwelt amongst them, unseen by mortal eye.

"O little birds," she said, "the great and good God loves you! It is He who fills your hearts with joy and your throats with song. Oh, that I too were a bird, that I might sing to Him!"

And the birds carolled louder, and flew from branch to branch in the shady forest, making it echo with their song. And so they spoke all day long to the child of Him who dwelt amongst them, unseen by mortal eye.

"O blessed light," cried she, holding out her hands as the glorious sun set in the west, "the great and good God loves you! It is He who kindled your burning fires, and stretches out your white beams till all creation sparkles with your brightness. Oh, that I were a sunbeam, that I too might shine so near Him, and might praise Him!"

And a bright glory flooded the golden west. It reached out to the fair child, en-

circling her with its arms of beauty, as her hair fell round her face like a crown of gold in the light which played upon her.

Thus from morning till eve the flowers, and the birds, and the rays of the sun spoke to Marianna of Him who lives amongst them unseen by eye of man.

V.

When Marianna arose in the morning she lifted up her hands and said :

“O great and good God, who art everywhere, but chiefly in the hearts of those that love Thee, take me to the heart that loves Thee best, that I may see Thee and learn to pray.”

Then she dressed herself, and arranged in order her grandmother's cabin ; and once again she wandered forth towards the valley where dwelt the holy hermit.

“For,” said she, “if I am near him I shall be near God ; for *he* loves the great and good God, and God dwells in his heart. Oh, that I could be a fairy child, that I might

live with his book, in his dress, and so be near his heart ! Then should I be near God, and learn to pray."

The day was sultry, and her little feet ached ; but still the child went on till she came to the mossy bank where she had slept before.

So she sat down to rest ; and as she sat there stood before her a beautiful Lady, more dazzling than the sun, and more lovely than the moon, all dressed in snowy white, with a crown of pure pearls upon her brow.

And the Vision was so bright and tender that the child closed her eyes for very sweetness, and a sense of perfect rest. But the Vision lifted her hands graciously over the little golden head, and blessed her and vanished.

When Marianna awoke she found herself no longer a sprightly little girl, able to trip over the ground from morning till night, but the smallest, tiniest little maiden that ever was seen.

Close by her side sat the holy hermit ; his eyes were bent upon his book, and his lips

whispered words which, although she understood them not, sounded strangely sweet to her ears.

She no longer feared him as before ; but, climbing on to his dress, she waited patiently till the prayers were ended and the book was closed.

Then the hermit looked upon her with a smile ; he held out his hand, and she climbed into it. Her voice was soft and clear, and she said—

“ Let me go with you.”

“ Sweet little one,” he answered, “ how like you are unto Marianna. Since you so resemble her, I will take you ; but there is nothing for little children in my cell, nor do I know where you can live.”

But Marianna pleaded, “ Let me be with your book, and I shall be near to God ! ”

“ You shall come,” said he, “ and you shall sometimes be with the book, for it is a holy book, and if you could read it it would teach you about God.”

Then the holy man arose, and placing his breviary within the folds of his cloak and

Marianna beside it, he returned straightway to his dwelling in the valley.

VI.

Thus Marianna's first wish was granted.

She nestled down close to the precious book, and listened to the soft beating of the heart against which it lay ; and she knew she was very near to God.

And again she cried : " O great and good God, whom I cannot see, but who art so very near me, teach me to love Thee, that I too may hold Thee in my heart ! "

Then it seemed to the child as though a veil was withdrawn from before her eyes, and that she could see a picture unfolding itself before her. At first it was in a mist, but it grew clearer and brighter the longer she gazed.

It was as though she saw a chamber, the walls of which were hung with golden tapestry, woven into pictures which she could not understand. But in the midst of them was a cross of pure light, and on it hung the figure

of the most beautiful Man that could be conceived. Rays of light from the figure filled the little chamber, and by this light she saw everything as it were in the brightness of day.

"O God," whispered the child, "teach me to love Thee !"

Marianna gazed and gazed until her heart overflowed : her eye never tired of gazing, nor her heart of longing.

"O God," she cried again, "who art Thou? Teach me to love Thee, that I may be ever near Thee."

The hermit was kneeling in his cell.

And Marianna saw the golden cross grow brighter and brighter, and the light flashed from it with such brilliance that all the other pictures became dim and vanished.

Then the child stretched out her hands to grasp the cross, but a voice whispered softly, "Not yet."

The hermit arose from his prayer, and, taking his breviary, he bethought him of her whom he took for a fairy child. He gathered a little moss from the brook side, and form-

ing over the bed he had made for her a little shelter of twigs and leaves, he laid her gently upon it, for she had fallen asleep.

And as he did so the vision passed from her sight.

VII.

Now, the old man built her a little cell, and planted lilies and violets round about it, but when he went abroad he placed her in the fold of his cloak according to her wish.

So each day she saw unknown to him the figure of the Crucified, who lived within his heart, and those rays of light fell upon her soul, drawing her to the pierced side, and filling her with untold joy.

She longed to enter the chamber, and sought about for some vacant spot within it, but there was none. Every corner was filled with images so bright and glorious, and with pictures so love-inspiring, that she felt that her wish was a hopeless one.

There was no place in that human heart even for her, the humble little Marianna.

Shall I *never* clasp that golden cross, or kiss the feet of Him who hangs upon it? O God, O wondrous God, how beautiful Thou art! O bid me come near Thee, that I may love Thee as they do who have Thee in their hearts!" And the child wept tears of joy and grief, for though she saw, yet she possessed not.

One day the holy man returned to his cell in deep meditation. The child still gazed on the vision which she saw within his heart, and gradually it melted away and was replaced by another. He had prostrated himself before the crucifix in his cell, forgetting to remove his cloak, in the folds of which the child knelt, looking and longing.

For the chamber into which she gazed became dim, and through the transparent mist which floated in the light of the Crucified a picture unfolded itself before her.

It was a garden. Lovely flowers and blossoming trees were there—trees, too, that bore golden fruit—and birds, and running brooks; but amidst it all was a light so dazzling, so penetrating, that it seemed to

burn all without consuming anything, and in the very midst of the light were a glorious man and woman. It was not the light of the Crucified—for it was in this light that she saw the other—but another. It grew into a circle, into which other circles wove themselves, and together they all formed into a triangle, which seemed at once the frame and the centre of the picture.

This picture flashed, and grew more and more distinct as she looked upon it, when suddenly it was replaced by a darkness and a horror, and she saw a serpent stealing round the picture frame, with its glittering false eye fixed on the woman. And it passed, but the garden was no more, but a waste, dreary and dark; and a weeping woman knelt at the feet of the Crucified.

Then the form of the woman passed away, and she saw the waves of a great sea raging in the midst of a storm, and a little boat tossing upon it. But the light from the cross guided it until the tempest was passed, and then the picture passed too, and nothing remained but the golden cross and the Crucified.

But a glorious Woman stood beneath it, the same whom once before Marianna had seen, and who had smiled upon her and blessed her. She stood there in her radiant beauty, and her foot was on the serpent's head.

Thus hours had passed, and still Marianna, with eye untired and soul unsatiated, gazed on the form of Him who drew her to His heart in silent suffering love.

"Oh that I could know Thee, thou wonderful God! Oh that I might love Thee and possess Thee, as they do who love Thee most!"

But of all this the hermit knew nothing, for Marianna spoke not aloud: it was her heart that cried silently to God.

VIII.

"Little one," said the holy man one day, "are you not weary?"

"How can I be weary when I am so near to God?" she replied.

"But you cannot know God," he said. "If

you were the real Marianna I could teach you, and you should be baptized."

"Teach me," said the plaintive little voice, "teach me as if I were the real Marianna. Oh teach me what it is to be baptized!"

"It is to be made the very child of the great and good God."

"And then may I touch the golden cross? Oh, let me be baptized!"

"What do you mean by the golden cross, little one?"

Then the child told him all that she had seen.

The holy man praised God exceedingly, for he thought that she had seen a vision, not that she had looked into his own soul.

"I will teach you, little one," said he, "and you shall be God's child if He wills it, but I know not if it be so."

Then the child raised her hands as she was wont to do, and exclaimed—

"O great and good God, shining down from the golden cross, who art everywhere, but chiefly in the hearts of those that love Thee, let me be taught to know Thee, that

even I, the little one, may be Thy child, and may have a heart which loves Thee, in which Thou mayest dwell and never leave me ! ”

Thereupon the holy hermit praised God, and said—

“ Be it so, my child. The holy drops shall be poured upon thee, and thou shalt be His child for ever.”

IX.

And the hermit taught her to call him father.

“ Father ! ” she said to him one day, “ when the holy drops shall have fallen on my head, will the great and good God let me be with Him always ? ”

“ Whilst thou lovest Him above all things, He will be in thy heart, and will never leave it.”

“ And shall I see Him as He is ? ”

“ Not yet.”

Then Marianna went into her cell, and she said : “ O great and good God, shining from the golden cross, give me a heart to love

Thee above all things ; and when the holy drops fall upon me, let me see Thee as Thou art and never leave Thee."

The child prayed thus because the image of the Crucified lived in her memory, and she spoke to it all day long of her love and of her longing.

Meanwhile the holy man taught her by little and little, and so she learned the holy Faith. The love of God, too, grew in her heart stronger and stronger, and she waited for the blessed time when she should be united to God. But she was silent, for she knew not in what words to speak of her love.

X.

And the child found a voice at length, and she began to speak to all the things which she saw around her.

"O all ye lovely things of God," she cried, "love Him and praise Him with me ; for He is my Father, and I am to be His own for ever !

"O ye little birds, come and sing to God,

and praise Him with me; for He is my Father, and I am to be His own child for ever!

“O ye beautiful flowers, open your leaves and breathe forth sweet odours, and praise God with me; for He is my Father, and I am to be His child for ever!

“O thou glorious light, shining down from heaven upon all that God has made, come and praise Him with me; for He is my Father, and He will show the light of His countenance upon me for ever!

“O ye shady trees of the forest, wave your branches, and whisper God’s praises with me; for He is my Father, and I am to be His child for ever!

“O thou little brook of running waters, murmuring softly over thy bed of stones, come and praise the great and good God with me; for He is my Father, and I am to be His child for ever!”

And all day long, as the maiden sat in her mossy cell or walked forth in the wood, she spoke of her joy to the only companions she had; and thus the summer passed quickly away.

XI.

Day by day, when evening came, Marianna went forth with the holy hermit, and lived in the wondrous thoughts which filled his heart during long hours of meditation and prayer. The pictures which she saw in his heart changed as his thoughts changed ; but the calm brightness was always the same, and the cross shone ever more and more, now making the objects around it clear, now absorbing them into itself, but ever reigning supreme in the midst, surrounded by a calm glory which made the child's heart glow like fire. As his instructions sank into her mind, so did these images have a meaning for her, and became the food of her soul ; and all the day she longed for evening to come that she might gaze upon them again.

And thus passed the autumn and the winter, and the sweet spring-time came, when one day the holy man said to her—

“Little one, I am going on a long journey.”

The child replied, "I will go with you."

"Be it so," answered the hermit, "for the time is come."

So the child went to her cell, and bade farewell to the home she loved, and to the companions of her solitude, saying—

"The great and good God hath called, and I must go. My Father hath spoken, and I can stay no longer.

"O ye beautiful creatures, amongst whom He dwelleth, unseen by mortal eye, farewell ! O lovely works of His hands, I shall see you no more !

"But I shall go to Him, and He will come to me ; I shall love Him for ever and for ever, for He loveth me, and I shall never cease to be His child.

"O ye birds, and flowers, and trees, sunshine and clouds, ye little brooks and mossy banks, continue to praise Him exceedingly with me ; for He hath called me, and I am going to live in His Heart, and to be with Him for ever !"

Thus did the child sing in the gladness of her soul, and when the early morning broke

the holy solitary placed her within the fold of his cloak and departed.

XII.

But the vision had changed which she saw in his heart, and the child gazed with wonder and awe into the bright chamber.

For in the midst of it was a throne of living fire, and in the midst of the throne a crystal brighter than ten thousand diamonds, and in the midst of the crystal a living light, brighter than all created light, more beautiful than all created gems. And the glory flashed all through the sanctuary, and she could feel the deep throbbing of a heart on fire with the love of God.

The child had now no words ; her soul was rapt in worship, in one ceaseless act of love. How long the vision lasted she knew not : the weary feet of the solitary might have told, but they kept it secret even from himself, and late in the evening he knelt before the altar in a little chapel far away, dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

And now, within the very midst of the crystal light which seemed to pierce through her heart of hearts, the golden cross appeared, and He who hung upon it seemed to hold out His hands towards her, and to point to His wounded side, showing her the Heart most dear to God Himself.

The child had no words to speak: her worship was one thrilling act of burning love.

XIII.

She saw—but it was outside her. She saw—but as yet she possessed not.

.
And now the aged solitary has placed her on the edge of the marble baptismal font. The priest and the acolytes stand by.

The holy drops have fallen on her head, and the child Marianna stands by her guardian in her natural form and grace. But she heeds not, she scarcely knows the outward change.

The inner change! she knows it! Her arms are stretched towards the altar, and with longing, eager eyes she exclaims—

“O great God, O Father of all, come into my heart, for I love Thee! Be in me as Thou art in those who love Thee best: O let me come to Thee, and never more leave Thee!”

They lead her to the steps of the altar ; she kneels, and with one sob of ecstatic joy her stainless soul springs from its prison-house. It has fled to the wounded side of Him whose Heart alone could be her resting-place, and has found its home in the abyss of the perfect love of God.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”



**The Holy House of Nazareth
and Loreto.**

THE
HOLY HOUSE OF NAZARETH
AND LORETO.

I.

IT was when the ancient religion of the Jews was on the decline, and the stranger, according to the prophecy of Jacob, ruled in the land of Judea, that there lived in the city of Nazareth, a town of Galilee, and not far distant from Mount Carmel, a just man named Joachim, of the tribe of Juda, and of the race of David through Nathan. His wife was called Anne, a name which in Hebrew signifies "gracious."

Both were just in the sight of God, and walked before Him with a perfect heart; but one great blessing was denied them: they had no child.

But the humility and resignation with

which they bore this trial, so great amongst the Jews, brought for them an unlooked-for reward. After twenty years Anne gave birth to a daughter, who was the immaculate lily, the chosen one of God, the blessed one of all generations.

It was in a little house abutting against the side of a rock, the property of her holy parents, that Mary the mother of God was conceived without stain and born. This house was a dwelling such as belonged to the less wealthy class amongst the Jews; the larger portion of it was a cave hollowed out of the rock, and communicating with that portion of masonry which stood against the opening into the cave by a large door in the middle of the wall. The part of the house which stood in front of the cave was an oblong square, divided into two compartments. In these little chambers two of the greatest mysteries of our Holy Faith took place: the Immaculate Conception of our Lady, and the Incarnation.

It was here that our Lady spent the first few years of her beautiful life, until she was

removed to the temple at Jerusalem, where she made the vow, until then unknown amongst the Jews, of perpetual virginity. This was in correspondence with the interior working of the Holy Ghost, who designed thereby to sanctify her wholly for the mysteries about to be accomplished in and through her.

It is a pious opinion that when St. Joachim sent for his daughter to bless her on his death-bed, whilst he yet stretched his hands over her, the knowledge of her glorious destiny was revealed to him, and that in that moment of supreme joy he died.

Our Lady had been placed at a very tender age amongst the sacred virgins in the temple, but it nowhere appears that her vow of perpetual virginity was known to her parents, without whose consent it could not have been taken. It was, therefore, very probably during the days of mourning following her father's death that she consecrated herself to the service of God, with the intention of remaining always in the temple, the attraction of her soul being towards the House

chosen by God for His honour to dwell in. Little did she know what that attraction foreshadowed, and that she, who had indeed no taste but for the things of God, was herself chosen by the eternal love of God to be the special temple of His divine presence, and the channel of His grace and of His love to all mankind.

After the death of her parents, the care of this gracious child devolved upon guardians of the priestly race. Certain Arab traditions affirm that this special charge was entrusted to Zacharias, the holy spouse of Elizabeth, a cousin of Mary on the mother's side. This is all the more probable as we know that in after-years she visited St. Elizabeth after the manner of one who looked upon her cousin's house more in the light of a paternal home than as a stranger; and in no other case would it have been right, according to the custom of the Jews, to have paid so long a visit at such a time if she had not considered the house of Elizabeth as sacred as a second home.

From the sacred precincts of the temple,

where she had lived in all the luxury of a contemplative life ; from the priestly dwelling where she had been accustomed to all the comforts usual amongst the Jews ; from all that seemed most attractive, naturally and supernaturally, to her holy soul, our Lady separated herself by obedience, in order to be espoused to St. Joseph, and to return with him to her own humble dwelling at Nazareth as the wife of a carpenter.

It is piously believed that a spouse for our Lady was chosen by lot. An ancient tradition recorded in the Proto-Gospel of St. James, and mentioned by St. Jerome, relates that the candidates for her hand, after having prayed to Him *who presides over the lots*, deposited overnight in the temple each one his rod of almond tree, and that the next day the dry and dead branch of Joseph the son of Jacob was found green and in blossom, like that which had before confirmed the priesthood to the sons of Aaron. The history of Mount Carmel testifies that at the sight of this prodigy, which destroyed his hopes, a young patrician, belonging to one of the most

powerful families of Judea, and the possessor of a great fortune, broke his rod with every sign of despair, and immediately shut himself up in one of the caves of Carmel with the disciples of Elias. This youth, who is said to have been named Agabas, became afterwards celebrated for his sanctity and a Christian.

II.

The house to which our Lady returned on being espoused to St. Joseph was the patrimony which had descended to her as the last of her family. Thus our Lady was an heiress, and as property was not easily transferable amongst the Jews, we can understand how that home remained untouched for so many years during the residence of the holy family in Egypt. We learn from Nicephorous Callistus that, in consequence of the disturbed state of the land of Judea in those days, the parents of the Blessed Virgin had thought it prudent to quit the town of Bethlehem, in which was the patrimony of

their ancestors, and to purchase for themselves a little house at Nazareth. "There are still found at Nazareth," says F. de Geramb, "some houses like that of St. Joseph, that is to say, small, low, and communicating with a cave hollowed out of the side of a mountain." It is therefore not improbable that St. Joachim, having left his property in Bethlehem, as he supposed, for a time only, looked upon his house at Nazareth as a very temporary home, little thinking of the glory which awaited it. For the house at Bethlehem is gone for ever, whilst the holy one of Nazareth, so long as time shall last, will be a centre of the devotion of the faithful; and, if we may suppose that our Lady's love for the dwelling in which she was so wonderfully overshadowed by the Holy Ghost, and in which for thirty years she lived with her divine child, has been the cause of its supernatural preservation, may we not devoutly hope that she may preserve it still, even after time shall be no more, and thus permit the children of all ages and generations to have the happiness of worshipping

at the spot of all others most dear to herself and our Incarnate God ?

It is related in the Life of the Blessed Virgin, by Descoutures,* and also in the Life of Jesus Christ, by F. Valverde,† how by a divine inspiration it had been made known to our Lady that her holy spouse would be no more to her than a protector, a father, a guardian. Her desire to belong to God alone was known to Him, and answered according to the mysterious ways of Divine Providence. With what holy confidence and mutual respect must those blessed spouses have entered and taken possession of their humble dwelling.

The profession of an artisan was neither abject nor degrading in Israel. St. Paul himself, brought up in the study of the law, and the famous Pharisee doctor, Hittel, and after them a great number of doctors, who, in the emphatic language of the rabbins, "sowed light amidst the holy nations," applied themselves to mechanical arts, and

* Vie de le Sainte Vierge, p. 49.

† Vie de J. C., p. 71.


were not ashamed. Every Israelite was an artisan, and every father was bound to make his son learn a trade, "unless," said the law, "he wishes to make a robber of him."

Now St. Joseph, though poor and an artisan, was of the race of David. The blood of twenty kings flowed in his veins. Zorobabel, one of his ancestors, had brought back the people of God from the land of exile. The holy daughter of Joachim did not then lower herself by marrying a carpenter. But if we look higher we shall rather see that it was a noble alliance. Joseph was chosen by God to be the spouse of the Queen of Angels, because instead of worldly wealth he possessed treasures of grace and sanctity. The Virgin Mother of God was too exalted a person to be confided to any but the most worthy, and as we know that it has always pleased God to prepare His instruments for any special work designed by Him, we may feel sure that St. Joseph was created and sanctified purposely for His great charge, and that, having corresponded perfectly with the

graces of his election, he had merited those which were further in store for him.

It does not, however, appear that any special revelation was made to the holy pair concerning the object of their union. They seem to have been guided step by step in the way which God had marked. Thus honouring one another, and seeing God alone in all their mutual relations, they journeyed to Nazareth, not knowing the things which were to befall them there.

"The travellers," we read in Husenbeth's *Life of the Blessed Virgin*, "stopped at the house of St. Anne, an ancient and mysterious dwelling, partly hollowed out of the rock, like the prophetic grottoes of ancient times, and which was shortly to become more holy than the temple of Jerusalem, the very house of Jehovah. The women of Nazareth greeted with blessings the arrival of the young bride, who advanced modestly, veiled like the Rebecca of Isaac; and Mary, in the midst of the congratulations of those who had witnessed her birth, entered this peaceful paternal habitation, which still seemed perfumed with



the sweet odour of the virtues of Anne and Joachim."

III.

The house of St. Joseph was situated about a hundred and forty paces from that of St. Anne. The place is still pointed out under the name of "the workshop of Joseph." The site of this shop was afterwards occupied by a large church, a portion of which was destroyed by the Turks. A chapel, however, remains, where the holy sacrifice is offered, so that the very spot where our Divine Lord worked may still be visited with devotion. The workshop itself was a low room, not more than twelve feet square; outside it a stone seat offered rest to the traveller. Here the sacred hands of our Lord assisted St. Joseph in making ploughs, yokes, and rough carts, as St. Justin Martyr records.

The hands of our Lady, accustomed to the delicate gold and silken embroidery of the temple, were henceforth occupied in plaiting the leaves of the date-palm for mats, or in

spinning flax for the garments which she made. She had to grind the wheat and barley and doura, the flour of which she kneaded into cakes. Like the wives of the patriarchs, she had to draw all the water for the house from a neighbouring fountain, and to carry it in a pitcher on her head ; and like the princesses of poetical tradition, it was her duty to wash her robes in the running water of the brooks. The fountain is still pointed out in the country as "the fountain of Mary."

In this modest and laborious seclusion, her time divided between her household works and her devotion, and her soul wholly given in all things to God, Mary was unconsciously awaiting her second overshadowing by the Holy Ghost. It is an ancient tradition, and one which the painter's art has studiously handed down to us, that our Lady was engaged in offering her evening prayer when the angel Gabriel saluted and blessed her in the name of the Most High, and made known to her that she was to be the mother of the Divine Word.

The will of God being made known to her,

she corresponded at once, and so fully, that scarcely had her lips pronounced the humble "fiat," when the Holy Ghost took possession of her immaculate heart, and she became the Mother of God Incarnate, His one chosen helpmate in the redemption of mankind.

This is not to be a history of our Lady, further than it may shed supernatural lustre upon her holy house, and give reasons for the loving care she has bestowed upon it for nearly two thousand years up to the present day, miraculously guarding it as she has done from harm, and making it, as it were, the centre of devotion to her on earth. So far from its being *a priori* improbable, it would rather seem most unlikely to the Catholic mind that our Lady would be less careful of such a sacred and precious spot than her devout children in all ages have been of places consecrated by the footsteps of God's chosen ones.

It was here, then, that Mary received that most wonderful of all messages from God her Father at the lips of His archangel Gabriel, one of the seven who always stand

before the throne of the Most High. Here, at the same moment, she accepted the awful overshadowing of her divine spouse, God the Holy Ghost, and received the gift of the Divine Maternity of her Son, God the Word. In this little room, so poor, so bare, so unattractive to the senses, the infinite majesty of the Creator stooped to the nothingness of the creature, and in the blessed shrine of a virgin temple the Eternal Trinity in Unity took flesh of woman, and WAS MADE MAN.

It might be thought that so great a revelation and such awful bliss would have been made by our Lady a plea for greater retirement and the uninterrupted enjoyment of the contemplation of God; but she was full of the Holy Ghost, and having therefore no thought of herself, she proceeded at once on a visit of devout congratulation to the house of her cousin Elizabeth, with whom she sojourned for the space of three months; after which, on her return to her home in Nazareth, the mystery concerning her being made known to her holy spouse St. Joseph, they remained there undisturbed for six

months, until obedience to a command coming from imperial Rome obliged them to go to Bethlehem, where our Lord was born.

The days of our Blessed Lady's purification being ended, the Holy Family returned to Nazareth, and the house of Mary and Joseph became glorified by the presence of the Infant Jesus.

Their days of security, however, were soon numbered. Joseph was warned by an angel of the peril which hung over the Holy Child, and which resulted in the massacre of the innocents at Bethlehem; and, in obedience to the heavenly command, arose the same hour of the night, and fled with the Child and His Mother into Egypt. Traditions are uncertain as to the length of time that the exile of the Holy Family lasted, but it is generally supposed to have been about seven years.

On their return, after so long an absence, it will be supposed that they would find their home needed repair, and very desolate. Whatever they had been possessed of had long since been spent, and nothing remained

to them but this ruined house ; but Jesus was with them, and possessing Him their house was rich indeed.

Of the interior life of that holy house we have not a single glimpse in the Gospel, nor even in tradition, further than this : that Jesus assisted St. Joseph in his work as a carpenter, and that after St. Joseph's death He lived in the Holy House, working for the support of His Mother, until He was thirty years of age.

IV.

The sanctity of the Holy House at Nazareth has been recognised from the very beginning of the Christian age. The worship and veneration of our dear Lady were authorised in the first place by the example of the apostles themselves, who consecrated her house, after her death, for religious worship, in order either to preserve it to posterity or else to increase thereby the Christian religion. Such at least is the tradition handed down from those early times.

Later on, in the fourth century, when Christianity had taken firm root under the protection of Constantine the Great, his venerable mother, St. Helena, in the course of her pilgrimage through the Holy Land, during which she adorned with many sacred edifices those holy spots which had been consecrated by the presence and sufferings of our dear Lord, came to Nazareth, where she found out the "House of the Angelical Salutation," and built over it a beautiful church. From that time it became a favourite resort of pilgrims from all parts of the known world. It was about the year 377 that St. Jerome and St. Paula visited the holy places of Palestine, and, amongst others, "*Nazareth, the nursery of our Lord.*"

We have it on the authority of the Venerable Bede, that in the year of our Lord 700, when Jerusalem was taken by the Saracens, the church wherein the angel saluted our Blessed Lady was visited greatly by European pilgrims.

The condition of the Christians in Palestine was not so bad under the Saracens as it was

afterwards under the Turks, who about the year 1050 began cruelly to dishonour the Christian name. This induced Pope Urban II. to proclaim the second Crusade. During the period which followed the conquest of Palestine by the Christian kings of the West, Tancred adorned the Church of Nazareth with many goodly gifts, which on account of its fame and sanctity was made the metropolitan church. We also learn that Victriacus, Patriarch of Jerusalem, who lived about that time, often made the pilgrimage to Nazareth in order to offer up the Holy Sacrifice in our Lady's House on the anniversary of her Annunciation. These peaceable times did not, however, last long, for Saladin reconquered the Holy Land about ninety years after the Christians had taken possession of it.

In the thirteenth century the holy king, St. Louis of France, sailed to Syria in order to assist the Christians, and, on the failure of his arms, he withdrew, not, however, without first satisfying his devotion by visiting the holy places. It is related that he journeyed from Mount Tabor to Nazareth, and that "as

soon as he saw the native house of the Blessed Virgin, he alighted from his horse, and, falling on his knees, saluted the house with great veneration, going thence on foot to the church, to reverence and worship the Son of God, there made man for love of man, and also His most Holy Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary. And the sacred festival of the Annunciation of Gabriel the archangel, and of the Blessed Virgin's conceiving of God, being then at hand, the pious king fasted the day before upon bread and water only, wearing a hair-cloth next to his skin. Upon the festival day itself he commanded that divine service should be celebrated with great solemnity, he himself receiving the most sacred Eucharist in the majestic cell of the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of God, with great abundance of tears and singular devotion." *

On the departure of St. Louis, the Knights-Templars still remained in the Holy Land, and according to their office defended for a time the sacred places with all their might. So long as from time to time they received


* "History of Loreto," by F. Torsellino.

help from Europe, they were able to do this; but in the fourteenth century the countries of Europe were at war amongst themselves, and all care of the Holy Land being neglected, the sacred shrines fell an easy prey to the Mahometans. On this account pilgrims were afraid to visit the less accessible portions of Galilee, infested as its wilder parts were with the armies of the infidel; and thus the house of our Lady was left, as it seemed, at their mercy.

It was at this time, at the very moment when due reverence could no longer be shown to it, that our Blessed Lady took the care of her sacred dwelling into her own hands, and had it removed, as we are about to see, beyond reach of harm, into the very midst of Christendom.

V.

On a hillside on the east coast of Italy, at a distance of about three miles from the sea, and eighteen miles south of Ancona, stands the city of Loreto. On the summit of the



hill, towering far above the surrounding buildings, rises a magnificent church, with its great dome and tall campanile. This is the famous shrine of our Lady of Loreto.

On entering this church there is seen beneath the dome a singular-looking rectangular edifice, of no great height, constructed apparently of white marble, and richly adorned with statues and sculpture. The contrast between the poverty of the interior and the richness of the exterior is astonishing. The walls of the interior are the plain rough walls of a cottage, evidently of great antiquity. Towards the eastern end of the house, but at some little distance from the east wall, stands an altar, with an altar screen of pillars and arches, which divides the house into two unequal parts. Behind the altar, in a niche in the east wall, is an image of our Lady and Child. It is said to be of olive wood, and partly from the nature of the wood, and partly from age, and from the constant smoke of the ever-burning lamps, it has become perfectly black. Both Virgin and Child wear on their heads precious crowns of gold,

and the figure is clothed in a rich robe adorned with brilliants and pearls. This is the famous image of our Lady of Loreto.

On the 6th of May 1291 the Holy House, so dear to God Himself, and our Blessed Lady, was transported out of Syria by the hands of angels, being separated from its foundations, which still remain to be seen. It was placed by the angels on the summit of a hill at Tersatto, a small town in Dalmatia near Fiume, on the eastern side of the Adriatic.

“The ridicule of one half the world, and the devotion of the other half,” writes Dr. Northcote,* “has made everyone acquainted with the strange history of this translation, which is written in all the languages of Europe round the walls of the sanctuary. How the house in which our Blessed Lady was living at Nazareth, when the angel Gabriel was sent to her from God, and in which the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished ; in which, also, Jesus was brought up and was subject to His parents ; from which

* Shrines of the Madonna.

He went forth to the Jordan to be baptized by John before He began His public ministry—that this house or chamber was miraculously transported by the hands of angels, first from Galilee to Dalmatia, and afterwards from Dalmatia to Italy, towards the end of the thirteenth century, where it has ever since remained, an object of the deepest veneration to all the faithful.”

In the quaint language of F. Torsellino, who wrote in the year 1608,* the event is thus described :—

“Therefore, even here (Tersatto) about the second vigil of the night, by commandment of the Mother of God, heavenly ministers did seat the most sacred house of Nazareth, that it might be a most certain succour to all that were any way endangered; and as soon as the morning light showed this gift of the divine liberality to the inhabitants, in very deed, not only admiration, but also devotion and piety, were poured into their hearts, dismayed with the strangeness of the thing.

* We quote from an old English translation, printed in 1608.

Whereupon they that were nearest at hand, as soon as they espied it, ran contendingly with desire to see it; and they beheld a little house with a sharp roof, graced as well with the top of a chimney as with a little bell hanging up on high, but in nothing more remarkable than the antiquity thereof. On entering, they found it to be a sacred chapel, of a long square form, built of ordinary stone, having a fair roof vaulted with frets . . . which, being divided with small squares, and flourished with blue colours, was beautified with gilded stars as if it had been in a certain heaven.

“The length of the sacred house is about forty feet, the breadth twenty, and the height about twenty-five feet. On the left hand standeth a little cupboard of simple work, made to keep earthen vessels; on the right hand there is a window, not very big, and over against the window a mean and slender chimney of common workmanship, as the rest are. And even here standeth a high niche, vaulted with an arch of the same work, resembling five moons joined together, in

which niche is placed a cedar image of our Lady standing, being about two cubits high, who with her left hand embraceth the sweet child Jesus, and supporteth Him with the right.

“Before the image of the Mother of God there is an altar of freestone squared, seeming to breathe forth sanctity. When the Dalmatians had viewed all this with leisure, albeit they were ignorant what it was, yet with common consent they agreed that it was doubtless the gift of God. Departing, therefore, from thence, they told what they had seen, whereupon many, and amongst them some diseased people, flocked to the new spectacle of so great a thing, expecting some help thereby. And their hope was not deceived ; for to sound bodies the religion of the place imparted health of mind, and to the diseased, the cure of their infirmities.”

VI.

It is related that it pleased our Lady to reveal the nature of the sacred edifice, which

she had caused thus to be miraculously translated to the Dalmatian shores, to a man of great holiness of life, called Alexander de Georgio, or, as he is named in another account, Alexander the Bishop. Being confined to his bed of a grievous malady, at the time that the wonderful apparition was being rumoured abroad, he prayed very devoutly to our Blessed Lady for light on this subject, being fearful lest his flock should be deluded by the Evil One to their harm. In answer to his prayer, our Lady appeared to him herself in a vision, and related to him what she had done by the power of God, in testimony to the truth of which she restored him at once to perfect health. At the same time the archangel Gabriel is said to have appeared to a certain holy widow, named Agatha, on whose ground the house was placed, and to have made a similar revelation to her.

After this, Count Nicholas Frangipani, in whose domains Tersatto was situated, wishing to be quite certain that the house was really the house of Nazareth, despatched the above-mentioned Alexander the Bishop, with three

companions, to Palestine. The four being safely arrived at Nazareth, they learned from the inhabitants that the house had gone, no one knew whither. They were then shown where it had stood, and the ruins of the great church which St. Helena had built over it. The measurements of the foundations they found perfectly to agree, as did also the date of the disappearance of the house from Nazareth.

But the joy of this heavenly gift was not destined to be of long duration. On the 10th December 1294, after the house had remained among the Dalmatians for nearly three years, it suddenly disappeared, and left no sign whither it had gone. Great was the sorrow of the people at their loss; and in order to console them to some extent, Nicholas Frangipani erected a small church in the same spot where the Holy House had stood. He also placed on the hillside of Tersatto a stone bearing this inscription: "The house of the Blessed Virgin came from Nazareth to Tersatto on the 10th May 1291, and left on the 10th December 1294." This inscription is spoken

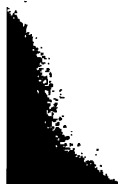
of by writers in the sixteenth century ; and there is now to be seen, in a chapel on the hillside, a stone bearing this inscription, in rather ancient characters. The model, built by Frangipani, was enclosed in a magnificent church, where afterwards many miracles proved that the place itself was pleasing to our Blessed Lady, and that her help remained to the Dalmatians, though her house had been taken from among them. The church was committed to the Franciscan Fathers of the Observance, and became very celebrated ; but this did not extinguish the love of the Dalmatians for the sacred house they had lost, for 300 years later they still flocked in large pilgrimages to visit the shrine in Italy, with tears and sighs, beseeching our Lady to return to them. " I was sitting in the church at Loreto," says Father Riera, in the year 1559, " when I heard a most unusual disturbance, and the sound of much crying and groaning. I came out to inquire the cause, and at the threshold of the church I saw, kneeling, from four to five hundred Dalmatians, men, women, and children, divided into

different companies, each company under the direction of a priest, and all crying out with sighs and tears, 'Return, return to us, O Mary! O Most Holy Mary, return to Fiume.' Touched with compassion, I drew near to a venerable priest who was amongst them, and asked the cause of their sorrow; and with a deep sigh, he answered, 'Ah, they have only too much cause;' and again he repeated, with still greater energy, 'Return, return to us, O Mary!' At last I was obliged to exert an authority to restore order and enforce silence; and, indeed, their prayers were so earnest I could not but fear that God would listen to their request." The testimony of Father Torsellino, forty years later, is equally distinct; he says that these pilgrims came every year in great troops, and "do not seem to do more reverence to the native house of the Blessed Virgin than to lament the detriment of their nation, whose solemn complaints, '*Return to us, O Mary,*' do not a little signify that their desire shall be everlasting, seeing it is nothing at all abated in the space of 300 years, and also witness that the house of

Nazareth was transported out of Sclavonia into Italy."

VII.

On a night of December, 1294, this heavenly treasure was carried over from Dalmatia into Italy. It was a period of civil war and commotion in Europe, and Boniface VIII. was the Sovereign Pontiff. The spot chosen for the second translation of the Holy House was a laurel wood not far from Recanati, whence the name by which the sanctuary was afterward called. There is a tradition handed down to us by Father Torsellino (of whose painstaking accuracy, we have on high authority, there can be no doubt, especially with regard to what is supernatural in his history), "that the trees which were in the way, as the little house of our Blessed Lady came thither, bowed down as it were to reverence it, and as long as the wood stood the said trees were wont to be showed to the pilgrims in a long rank to witness so great a miracle. Now in the quiet night the sacred



house of the Blessed Virgin was seated in a void place of the aforesaid wood, at which time the shepherds of Recanati were keeping their flocks, and dividing the vigils of the night amongst them; suddenly a great light environing the sacred house, drew the eyes of the warders unto it; to whom it seemed wonderful, upon the sudden, to see a new house in that solitary place all glittering with great brightness; and one of them averred that he had seen it when it came high over the sea. As soon as day dawned they hastened to see the wonderful sight, and having examined it with feelings of dread and exquisite devotion, they hastened to communicate to the people of Recanati the extraordinary event."

Although, for some time, nothing was known about the house, except that it had served as a church and was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, whose statue occupied so prominent a place, the miraculous character of its appearance drew people from all parts, and devotion to our Lady was increased exceedingly by the numerous miracles ob-

tained there by the faithful through her intercession. The disturbed state of Italy, and the numerous bands of robbers which infested the woods, made it unsafe for pilgrims to journey thither, to remedy which inconvenience it pleased God that the house should again be transferred to a small hill hard by, the property of two brothers. These men, tempted by avarice, were drawn into some dispute concerning the site which the house now occupied, and, in consequence, it was once more transferred, and placed on its present site, a very short distance beyond the property of these brothers, whose discord—the cause being removed in a manner so well calculated to mark the divine indignation—immediately ceased.

And to this day there exists in all those places undoubted proofs of the miraculous visitation of the house of our Lady. For we have seen that Nicholas Frangipani erected a magnificent church over the house, which he built upon the impression where the other stood; and in this church, not far from the door of the new house, there is the monument

of N. Frangipani, who, in token of his great devotion, chose for his tomb a spot near those impressions, where also may be seen a very ancient marble table whereon is engraved: *This is the place where the most sacred house of the Blessed Virgin of Loreto sometime was, that is now revered in the territories of Recanati.*

And in that place where it rested when it came first into the March of Ancona—as long as the wood stood, which it did for nearly 300 years—there appeared no obscure sign of the removal of the sacred house, for that portion of ground on which it had rested was always beautiful with ever verdant grass and flowers, when all the rest was a thick overgrowth of thorns and briars. In 1575 Father Riera built a low wall around it, making the depth and breadth of the enclosed area similar to those of the Holy House.

The other site is at the west end of the piazza before the church; a carved stone marks the place.


The last site is that which is at present occupied by the Holy House. The ancient

road upon which it was placed has disappeared, and the town of Loreto has sprung up around it.

VIII.

The third and last translation of the house of our Blessed Lady took place in December 1295.

In the words of F. Torsellino we are told that "it is situated just to the four regions of heaven and earth, according to the rule of the mathematicians; and not according to that rule only, but also by an ancient institution of the holy Fathers, who commanded that the altars of sacred houses should stand towards the rising of the sun. Therefore the fore-wall of this most sacred house, beautified with the window whereat the angel is said to have entered, doth stand towards the sunset, and the hinder, adorned with the altar standing before the image of our Lady, looketh so directly towards the sun rising, that in either Equinox, for the space of ten days the sun when he riseth shineth on the hinder part,



and when he setteth on the former part thereof, whereby a little before he setteth, the sun shining in at the window, cometh to the Blessed Virgin as it were to salute her at night, sith he cannot salute her in the morning."

The second year of the transposal of the Holy House to Italy, our Blessed Lady deigned to make known the real nature of the house by means of a revelation, as she had done at Tersatto. There was a holy hermit named Paul à Silva, who lived on a wooded hill between Loreto and the sea, which went by the name of Mont' Urso. One night the Blessed Virgin appeared to him in a vision, and bade him be of comfort for all the anxiety he had shown and the prayers he had offered to obtain certain information respecting a shrine which doubtless belonged to her, and she told him that indeed it had been her home on earth, which being neglected in Galilee, had been, by the command of Almighty God, transported thither by the hands of angels. She told him moreover that the house had been given to the people of Italy

as a pledge of pardon and peace in time of calamity, and as a most certain refuge and defence unto all nations in the perils and dangers of this mortal life. She then commanded him to go and to declare these things to the city of Recanati.

When this revelation had been made known to the people of Recanati, it was judiciously resolved to send a deputation of sixteen men into Dalmatia and Galilee to seek out the truth of the whole matter, who arriving at Tersatto were shown the place where the house was being built over the impressions of their lost treasure. The deputation then applied the measures they had brought to every portion of the vacant space, and they were found to correspond in every respect. Also the time of the departure of the Holy House agreed with its arrival at Recanati. Then, having rehearsed mutually the divers miracles which had taken place through the interception of our Lady, both in Tersatto and Loreto, the deputies departed further on their journey with great gladness of heart.

They next proceeded to the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, and then journeyed on to Nazareth, where they inquired for the birth-place of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Christians of the neighbourhood then gave such information as they knew, and brought them to the spot, that they might see the place where the house had stood, and its floor, and the foundations which still remained, whilst, nevertheless, the house itself had been removed. The measurements were again taken and found to correspond exactly, after which the deputation returned with great rejoicing to their native town of Recanati. These occurrences took place in the year 1296.

IX.

After this the devotion of the people was greatly strengthened by the miracles which daily occurred at our Lady's house. Other signs took place no less extraordinary, amongst which the most remarkable was the sudden appearance of flames of fire, with which the Holy House was occasionally sur-

rounded. "For many times," says the pious Torsellino, "upon the sudden, a flame of fire was seen to spread itself abroad and to come from heaven in the night, which at first glittering as though it were dispersed in sundry places, but afterward making as it were one stream, and going towards the cell of the Mother of God, filled all round about with heavenly light." The holy hermit, Paul à Silva, to whom our Lady had vouchsafed in the first place to appear, as has been related, was constant in his attendance at the house, and he observed year by year, for the space of ten years, on the 8th of September, that a great fire came down from heaven and surrounded the roof. It was revealed to him in vision that the reason of this was that it was the Nativity of our Lady, and that she wished that day to be especially observed. These flames frequently recurred during the next two centuries. In the year that Pope Paul III. died, the church at Loreto was seen by some Capuchin Fathers surrounded with flames; and in the year 1555, when one of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus was preaching


in the church, the flames were seen descending from heaven and resting upon the Holy House. After a time they surrounded the congregation, and then were drawn up again into heaven. F. Riera, S. J., relates this :—

“Two years later, one of the Fathers was preaching, several were hearing confessions, and some were praying in the Holy House, when suddenly a heavenly flame, in shape like a comet, was seen to shine forth in the house, where it remained a short time ; it then encircled the people assembled in the nave of the church, and afterwards rested on each of the confessionals ; lastly it betook itself to the image of the crucifix, which is kept in the Holy House, and, after remaining there a short time, it disappeared.”

“Who,” says Father Renzoli, “does not see in this wonderful favour that the Holy Spirit was glorifying, by the splendours of His flames, the Virgin Mother in that sacred place in which He overshadowed her ? Who does not see that that same favour, which had been granted to the Virgin herself and to the Holy Apostles in the Cenacle, was then

renewed in the temple of the Virgin? Who does not understand how pleasing to her is the sacred ministry of him who serves her in her Holy House by dispensing in the sacrament of penance the great treasure of the merits of Her Son? And how great a pledge is this, that they will obtain pardon, grace, and salvation who come to the feet of the Virgin, to lay aside there the ancient slough of their sins? And, lastly, who does not see in this wonderful favour the abundance of the gifts which the Holy Spirit is ever ready to impart in this holy house?"

These marvels becoming more notorious, the Bishop of Recanati, in whose diocese they happened, thinking it an honour to religion, advertised Pope Boniface VIII. thereof, and obtained from him the government of the Chapel of Loreto; and in order to make room for the pilgrims, he had all the ground adjoining the sacred house consecrated to the Blessed Virgin, by gift of the citizens of Recanati; after which they began to build cabins and cottages for the entertainment of pilgrims, and afterwards larger houses. The



ground was levelled and the valley filled up, in order to make room for houses to be built by the wayside. With increased conveniences the multitudes of strangers increased, the attraction of the place being soon after marvellously enhanced by the celebrated jubilee of 1300, proclaimed by Boniface in order to invoke the mercy of God upon the distracted nations of Europe. In consequence of this jubilee the confluence of the people from all parts to the city of Rome was so great, that it could scarce contain so great a multitude of strangers, who were counted by hundreds of thousands. Many of these were moved with the fame of the miracles wrought therein to visit the house of Loreto, that they might thus witness for themselves the truth of those wonders. Thus the fame of them was spread abroad into all the countries of Europe, and the number of pilgrims was greatly increased.

X.

The inhabitants of Recanati, seeing that multitudes of pilgrims began to arrive regu-

larly at the shrine of our Lady at Loreto, resolved, for the sake of greater reverence, to protect the chapel with due care. The walls being very ancient, and having stood in their present position without foundations, it was feared lest the weather, and time, and constant visiting might cause it to decay and fall into ruin. It was, therefore, determined that foundations should be carefully dug, and that the building itself should be encased in a brick wall.

But, strange to say, the new foundations could by no means be made to adhere to the sacred walls, a proof unmistakable that human industry was not required for the support of a divinely-sustained building. More than this, the casing of brick by little and little receded from the walls it was intended to support, until there was sufficient room between the outer and the inner building to allow of the passage of a boy holding in his hands a lighted torch.

This separation was commonly thought to be miraculous; and it appears the more likely that this was the case, since, from the account

given, the new walls all round the building seem to have separated themselves from the Holy House entirely, and not merely here and there, as might easily have happened had it been the effect of a mere settlement of a new building. But, whatever may have been the reason, there was no doubt about the fact, for Riera, who died in 1582, says that in his day there were many living who had beheld this prodigy with their own eyes, and, amongst others, Rainerius Nerucci, the architect of the Holy House. It was this same Nerucci who, when, by order of Pope Clement VII., he was about to enclose the sacred edifice with an encrustation of marble, found those brick walls removed from it in a manner quite unaccountable by all rules of architecture.

At the same time that the devout people of Recanati were engaged in their useless endeavours to strengthen the walls of the Holy House, it is reported that the venerable image of the Crucifixion, which had been brought over with it, became famous for the repetition several times of a strange miracle ;

for when the Bishop of Recanati had removed it thence, and placed it in a chapel adorned to receive it, the crucifix returned to its former position in the Holy House ; and this happened not once or twice, but as often as they attempted to remove it, until the attempt was given up.

After this the people of Recanati turned their attention to adequately providing for the reception of strangers and pilgrims, and also for the votive offerings of all kinds which poured in. For this purpose they built very large cloisters, and, in order that the devout multitudes might be able to assist at Holy Mass, an altar was erected outside for the convenience of those who, in consequence of their numbers, were unable to obtain admission into the chapel itself. To these cloisters were added houses, where dwelt the priests, keepers, and other officers of the sacred house, and the walls of the cloisters were adorned with paintings by an excellent artist of those days.

The town of Loreto now began to become very considerable in size and population, and,

in consequence of the notorious robberies which took place in the neighbourhood, occasioned by the offerings brought by pilgrims, it was decided that a governor should be appointed, and certain laws made for the due administration of justice.

After some time a great calamity befell the Church in the removal of the Pontifical See from Rome to Lyons by Pope Clement V., and, later on, by Pope John XXII. to Avignon, where it remained during the reign of several Pontiffs, until the days of Gregory XI., when it was restored to Rome through the prayers and divinely-appointed influence of St. Catherine of Siena. It was in the midst of this great trouble which had befallen the Church that the people of Recanati resolved to erect a new church about the Chapel of Loreto. The cloisters were, therefore, pulled down, and a space of ground surrounding the spot was purchased. A church was raised, with larger and more commodious houses for the priests and ministers, as well as for the accommodation of the better class of pilgrims; for the relief

of the poorer sort, a hospital was provided.

The first bull of indulgences granted to this church was issued in the time of Benedict XII., who succeeded John XXII., during the unhappy days of the transfer of the See of St. Peter to Avignon. The plenary indulgence then granted at the request of the inhabitants of Recanati to a devout visit to the Church of Loreto, enkindled a very great devotion amongst the surrounding people, so that, we are told, "most of the people of Recanati would scarcely be hindered by any business from going three miles daily to visit the Holy House; and, in order that the aged and the sick might share in these indulgences, an image of our Lady of Loreto was set up in the market-place, around which a chapel and an altar were built, and a brief was obtained from Pope Benedict granting them the same indulgence. At this time a little book was published by order of the Bishop of Recanati, containing the account of the arrival of the Sacred House and its triple translation, in order that a true

account thereof might be transmitted to future ages."

It is very remarkable that, in spite of the absence of the Pope from Rome, and the want of external help, the Holy House of Loreto continued to draw great numbers of pilgrims from all parts of Christendom. This must be looked upon as a clear proof of divine protection, and the account of the wonders and miracles by which it was ennobled at this time would alone occupy a volume.

The devotion to our Lady of Loreto received a further impulse in the time of the plague, which broke out in the city of Rome itself, and which caused the Italian people to seek her powerful aid. The troubles which followed this divine visitation caused Urban V. to return to Rome for a time in order to compose them. He died soon after his return to France, and was succeeded by Gregory XI. of happy memory, who restored the See of St. Peter to Rome.

XI.

From the earliest days of its translation, heavenly flames had been seen, year by year, to descend upon the Holy House, on the feast of our Lady's Nativity. These flames were of frequent occurrence during the first two centuries after the translation, and as late as the year 1555 they were seen descending while a Jesuit father was preaching. This fact is attested by Father Riera, S.J., who was present at the time.

It was in consequence of this supernatural visitation, by which the holiness of the place was made visible to all, that about the year 1390 Pope Urban VI. granted a plenary indulgence to those who should visit it on the day of our Lady's Nativity. The succeeding Pontiff, Boniface IX., also granted indulgences to those who should devoutly visit the Holy House.

This same Pope, Boniface IX., proclaimed the great jubilee of the year 1400. A great concourse of people was drawn to Rome from

all parts of Christendom by this jubilee. Many of them also visited Loreto, and in expectation of their coming the roads leading to it were repaired and paved for the accommodation of the pilgrims, and bridges were built over many of the rivers which intersect the March of Ancona. But the great schism which at this time afflicted the Church prevented anything further from being done for the outward improvement of Loreto.

Peace was restored to Christendom by the Council of Constance, and Martin V., who was then elected Pope, accorded special gifts and privileges to the Holy House as an act of thanksgiving for the blessings bestowed upon the Church. He enriched it with many indulgences, instituted certain markets at Recanati in honour of our Lady of Loreto, added greatly to the ornamentation of the Holy House, and erected buildings on the south side for the use of the priests who officiated in it.

The troubles caused to his successor, Pope Eugenius IV., by the schismatical Council of

Basle, and the celebration of the Council of Florence, left that Pope but little leisure to care for the house of Loreto. Nevertheless the shrine was certainly in great honour in his days, and the church was full of magnificent *ex-votos* and gifts of all kinds. This we know from a certain inscription fixed on the cell, as a votive offering, by Flavio Biondo, the Pope's secretary.

About this time Francis Sforza made war against the Pope, and invaded the March of Ancona. The Bishop of Recanati, therefore, removed all the chief ornaments and offerings from Loreto, and sent them by sea to Ravenna, until the danger should be past. The precaution was, however, unnecessary, for our Lady protected her house during this perilous time. Our Lady's sanctuary remained unhurt during the whole time that the war continued, and though the whole of the surrounding district was ravaged by the contending armies, no injury was done to Loreto, notwithstanding that it was wholly unprotected and the wealth of its sanctuary was well known—so much were men

in those days awed by the holiness of the place.

But the Holy House was no longer to remain undefended. In the year 1452, Constantinople, which had been until then the principal bulwark of Christendom against the Mahometans, fell into the power of the Turks. This disastrous event caused great terror in the nations of Europe, which were now left quite open to the attacks of the infidels; Italy was in especial danger, owing to its nearness to the Turkish empire. Nicholas V., the reigning Pontiff, made vigorous preparations for resistance, and caused Loreto to be strongly fortified.

His successor, Calixtus III., continued the work of resistance against the Turks. Notwithstanding his great age, he was filled with a fiery zeal for the defence of Christendom. He made use of the preaching of St. John Capistran to arouse the nations of Europe to a sense of their danger, and he raised a large army, which he sent into Hungary to aid the great Hunniades in fighting against the Turks. His legates, Roderic Borgia and John

Milianus, came to Loreto with their troops, to implore the blessing of peace through the intercession of the Mother of God, and obtained the help which they sought. For many successes were obtained by the Papal forces, and amongst others a naval victory, in which the little fleet of the Pope overcame the infidels and captured most of their galleys. These favours increased the confidence of the faithful in the intercession of our Lady of Loreto.

But this confidence grew stronger in consequence of a favour granted to the Sovereign Pontiff himself, which occurred in this manner.

Pope Pius II. was filled with the same zeal for the defence of Christendom against the Turks which had animated his predecessors in the chair of Peter. He strove earnestly to unite the Christian nations against the infidels, and succeeded in forming an alliance between the kings of France and Hungary, the Duke of Burgundy, and the Republic of Venice. He appointed Ancona as the meeting-place of the allied powers, and intended

to place himself at the head of the armament, in order to encourage the Christian armies by the presence of the Vicar of their Lord.

But when the time appointed for the meeting at Ancona had arrived, the Pope was seriously ill; not only was it impossible for him to take the journey, but his very life was despaired of. In these straits he dismissed his physicians, and implored the help of our Lady of Loreto for the recovery of his health, not so much for his own sake, but in order that the enterprise against the Turks, which had been organised with so much labour and difficulty, might not be brought to naught.

Animated with great confidence in the Holy Mother of God, he sent, as his offering to her Holy House, a very beautiful golden chalice, upon which he caused an inscription to be engraved, of which the following is a translation:—

“HOLY MOTHER OF GOD!

“Although thy power is not restricted to any place, but filleth the whole world with wonders, yet because it is thy will to take

delight in one place rather than in another, and because day by day thou dost adorn thy beloved seat of Loreto with unnumbered graces and miracles, I, unhappy sinner that I am, have recourse to thee with heart and soul, beseeching thee to take away from me this burning fever and most troublesome cough, and to restore to my feeble body its wonted health, that it may be profitable, as we hope, to the Christian commonwealth. In the meantime accept this gift as a token of my service.

“Pius, PP. II., in the year of our salvation, MCCCCLXIV.”

No sooner had the Pope made his offering than the fever abated, his cough began to diminish, and strength returned to his emaciated frame. Although not perfectly cured, he set out on his journey to Ancona, intending on the way to perform his vow of visiting our Lady's house at Loreto. As he approached the Holy House his strength gradually returned, and when he presented himself before our Lady's shrine, he was perfectly well.

As soon as the Pontiff had performed his vow he went on to Ancona, where, after waiting all the summer for the arrival of the Christian armament, having finished his work on earth for the welfare of Holy Church, he relapsed into a slow fever, and died, in sight of the Venetian galleys that had at length arrived to carry him and his allies to the land of the infidels.

XII.

On the death of Pope Pius II., at Ancona, it happened that, in consequence of the vast assemblage of people gathered there for the purpose of carrying on the crusade against the infidel, the plague broke out there. Terrified by the danger which threatened them the Cardinals took flight, and proceeded at once to Rome in order to elect a new Sovereign Pontiff. But they did not all escape the evil they sought to avoid ; amongst the rest, Peter Barbo, Cardinal of St. Mark, being taken ill, and having fresh in his memory the example of Pius II., caused himself to be conveyed

to the sanctuary of Loreto. When he came there, he laid himself upon the ground in the sacred cell, and placed himself without reserve into our Lady's hands, recommending with great fervour the whole Christian Church, deprived at that moment of its chief bishop, to God and the Blessed Virgin. As he was thus engaged in prayer, he fell into a gentle slumber, in which the Mother of God appeared to him, and bade him be of good comfort, assuring him that his prayer was granted, and that ere long he should himself be created Pope.

The event proved the truth of the vision, for, on awaking, his sickness was gone, his strength both of body and of mind had, beyond all expectation, returned, and, to the astonishment of every one, he left the house in perfect health. At once he sent for the Governor of Loreto, and declared to him that it was his intention to build at his own cost a very magnificent church to the honour of our Lady, desiring him at the same time to provide without delay all the necessary materials.

On arriving at Rome, and being elected Pope according to the word of our Lady, he took the name of Paul II. He did not forget his promise, but immediately set about fulfilling it. The old church was therefore pulled down, large foundations were laid, and the work was pressed forward with all speed.

That a great portion of the existing Church of Loreto was built by Paul II., is testified by a poem written at this time by one Baptist Mantuano. The following lines are a translation of two verses taken from it:—

“The building which, on Picene shores, you now far off behold,
Belongs to her who did God's Son in Virgin's womb enfold;
Which hither came from Syria, and by mighty angels' aid,
With passage strange above the sea, was through the air conveyed.

“Loreto's shrine it hath been named, yet must it not be thought
That this great temple also was from foreign countries brought;
These ornaments were added since, to grace the house withal,
At charge and great devotion of the prince of prelates, Paul.”

Successive Popes vied with one another in honouring the Sacred House with gifts, and Innocent VIII. committed the care of it to the Carmelite Fathers; for it was said that

these same Fathers had served it while it yet remained in Galilee, though this is not certain.

During the pontificate of Alexander, his successor, the city of Recanati was delivered miraculously from the plague, through a solemn vow made at our Lady's shrine by the principal inhabitants. On this same occasion, A.D. 1596, the statue was crowned with a jewelled diadem, the gift of the grateful people of Recanati; and this coronation was confirmed by the authority of Julius II. and other Popes.

Not long after this, Cardinal Jerome della Rovere perceiving that the floor of the sacred cell was crumbling away, partly with being knelt upon, and partly from the devotion of the pilgrims who scraped it away for relics, had it paved with squares of marble. A well was also opened in the cloisters for the convenience of the pilgrims. The same Cardinal, finding that the climate did not agree with the Carmelite Fathers, removed them from their charge, and placed the church under the care of pious secular priests, who continued to serve it until the pontificate of

Leo X., in whose days canons were appointed in their place.

The building of the church was carried on by Julius II., and is thus described by an early writer:—"To the beholder afar off it has the appearance of a castle rather than that of a church, the hill on which it is built adding greatly to its fortified appearance. The body of the church is supported by twelve great pillars, six on either side, and on each side of the nave are two aisles or wings, in which six small chapels are placed between the pillars. Round the head of the building seven greater chapels are erected, and four vestries in which are kept the offerings made to our Lady of Loreto. The sacred cell itself stands under the dome in the centre."

The last thing which Pope Julius II. is said to have done for the beautifying of the Holy House, was to prepare the costly marble destined to encrust the cell of our Lady. He had already caused a choir to be built, and organs placed in the church, as well as a belfry, which he had supplied with two fine bells. Doubtless he would have completed

the work he so loved had he lived longer, but God reserved that for the hand of another.

Leo X. yielded to none in the desire of honouring the Sacred House of Loreto. He erected the Church of Loreto into a collegiate church, giving it the usual privileges of such bodies. The canons were twelve in number, and from them the arch-priest and the keeper of the house were to be chosen. There were the same number of resident priests, and six clerics to assist in choir, and to each was assigned a yearly pension. He also granted to the house of Loreto all the indulgences which are enjoyed in Rome at the different stations; so that a stranger visiting the shrine of our Lady may gain in that one church the same indulgences which in Rome can be gained only by visiting many.

The preparations which had been made by his predecessor for the further ornamentation of the shrine, inspired Leo X. with the desire to spare no cost in the completion of the sacred edifice. He therefore committed the drawing of the plans to a celebrated architect of the time, by name Sansovino. The marble,

which was not collected in sufficient quantity, was brought in ships from Carrara, and wrought by the most skilful workmen that could be found, both Greek and Roman.

It was the Pope's very earnest wish that the Holy House should be completed before his death, and he pressed both architect and workmen to carry out his wish. But the quantity of carving and sculpture needed more time for its execution than a single reign would allow, and it was reserved for Pope Clement VII., who succeeded Adrian VI., to finish this holy work, and to render his pontificate really famous by his devotion to the Holy House of Loreto.

XIII.

Clement VII. determined to complete the incrustation of the Holy House with marble, according to the plan decided on by Leo X. For this purpose he engaged the services of the most celebrated sculptors. Whilst they were preparing their work, Nerucci, the architect, removed the brick wall which, as has been said, was built around the house.

He then erected in its place a new wall which was afterwards clothed with marble ; on this wall the present roof of the Holy House is supported, for the Pope, fearing lest the ancient roof, which was of wood, might take fire some day through the quantity of lamps that were always burning in the House, ordered a new roof of stone to be put in its place.

When Nerucci undertook to build the wall in question he found it necessary, for greater strength, to make new and deeper foundations. While, therefore, the excavations were going on, the walls of the Holy House were, as a measure of precaution, bound together with beams and ropes, at which time it was seen that the House had no foundations, the ground underneath being loose and dusty.


This fact has since been ascertained on several occasions. In 1672, when the marble pavement of the interior was renewed, several persons passed their hands beneath the sacred walls. It is to this date that the fact mentioned in the subjoined deposition of John Jerome Paccaroni, Dean of the Congregation of the Oratory at Fermo, refers. He says

that Joseph Culuzzia Vergelli, a noble of Recanati, who was architect of the Holy House of Loreto, used often to visit his father's house in Fermo, and that he had often declared to him that the Holy House had no foundations or support, but stood as it were in the air, as he said he had often pointed out to Monsignor Buttii, the Governor of Loreto, and to other persons, at the time when the pavement was being renewed, by passing and freely drawing a stick beneath the sacred walls; and this Signor Vergelli often asserted with his own mouth. The deposition is dated Rome, 14th November 1733. So also in the time of Benedict XIV., when the pavement of the Holy House was again renewed.

On this latter occasion, in order to remove every reasonable doubt, the Governor of Loreto caused an examination to be made in the presence of an archbishop, four bishops, an architect, and three master builders, with whom were united three foreign architects who happened to be at Loreto at the time. On making the necessary excavations, they found surface earth, mixed with small, broken,

and loose stones, immediately under the walls. The Bishop of Loreto, one of the examiners, drew forth, in a handful of earth and dust, a dried nut and a piece of bark ; and one of the foreign architects was not satisfied until he was permitted to dig deep enough to find virgin earth, which he did not come to until he had excavated a space large enough to permit him to stand under the wall in an inclined posture.

The principal alteration in the Holy House at this time was one which, though very convenient for the faithful, was such a bold step that only one possessed of the authority of the Supreme Pontiff could have ventured to order it. Up to the time of Clement VII. the Holy House had but one door, namely, on the north side, originally the opening communicating with the cave, as it stood in its position at Nazareth. This was found to be very inconvenient, and to cause great confusion among the crowds who were striving to enter or leave the house. Besides this, the doorway in question existed in the times of the Holy Family, as the doorway of the



house, and they must have frequently crossed its threshold. It was, therefore, unseemly that so sacred a spot should be the scene of these undignified struggles on the part of the people. The Pope, therefore, determined to close up the ancient door, and to break three new doorways in the walls of the house, two of them being respectively in the north and south walls towards the western extremities, thus giving to the people ample means of entry and egress ; the third doorway is in the south wall, and opens into the sanctuary of the Holy House, behind the altar. The work of rearranging the Holy House now proceeded rapidly. The altar, which stood against the south wall, was removed to its present position ; it is about four feet six inches long, with the top stone projecting, which is a dark black-looking slab, apparently of marble. Behind the altar the *Sacro Cammino*, or sacred hearth, was added to and brought to its present form. Above this the image of our Lady was placed, which had come in the Holy House when it arrived at Tersatto.

Besides this adornment of the Holy House, Clement VII. resolved to make a fresh investigation into its history. For this purpose he despatched three of his own chamberlains to Tersatto and afterwards to Nazareth; one of them seems to have been the intimate friend of Father Riera, the Jesuit. These three, all persons of great intelligence and devotion, proceeded in the first instance to Loreto, where they took the necessary measurements, and carefully examined the Holy House. Thence they went to Tersatto, where they found an ancient house resembling that of Loreto, and on its wall an inscription to the effect that the latter had formerly stood there. This house, too, had become famous for the miraculous graces bestowed there; and contained many memorials of them. The measurements were found to agree with those taken at Loreto. From Tersatto they proceeded to Nazareth, where the foundations of the Holy House were shown them by the inhabitants, and here they found that the measurements which they had taken of Loreto perfectly agreed.

One of the three, named John, a native of Siena, brought back with him two stones from Nazareth, and on his return he had them compared and analysed. They were found in every respect to resemble the stones of which the Holy House was built. Overjoyed at their success, they returned to Rome and made their report to the Pope, while John produced the stones he had brought from Nazareth; and thus the faith in the wondrous miracle was much increased.

The miracles wrought in the Holy House have been so numerous that the priests, being familiar with them as matters of daily occurrence, at length became careless in taking notice of them. In the words of Canon Raphael di Cingoli, "the miracles wrought in the Holy House were so frequent, nay, so continuous, that the priests who were its guardians became so familiar with the wonders they were so constantly beholding, that, as St. Augustine says, by their frequency they became of small account, and for some time they have ceased to keep up a record of them."

Not the least remarkable among the miracles connected with the Holy House are the severe judgments recorded which befell those who ventured, in the least, to injure the integrity of those holy walls. We can find space for only one such fact out of the numerous instances that are recorded. This was the case of the Bishop of Coimbra, who, through a misplaced devotion, carried away a stone from the Holy House. He was a Portuguese named John Soarez, an Augustinian, and confessor of John II., King of Portugal. On his way to the Council of Trent, which was then sitting, he visited the sanctuary of Loreto, and he conceived a great desire of taking home with him to Portugal one of the stones of the Holy House, which he intended to deposit in a church to be raised over it, and which should bear the name of our Lady of Loreto. The canons and the rest of the clergy of Loreto refused him permission, alleging that the thing was forbidden by the Pope, and that if once a beginning were made, every one would be removing some of the stones, and in a short

time there would be none left. The Bishop, however, persisted, and obtained from the Pope (Pius IV.) permission to remove the stone. As he, meantime, had gone on to Trent, he commissioned his secretary, Francis Stella, at once to return to Loreto and to take the stone. At Loreto it was regarded as a sacrilege, and although the clergy could no longer oppose him, they refused to render him any assistance. Stella, therefore, with his own hands removed the stone from the wall, while the keeper of the House prophesied that it would be the cause of trouble to his master, and would be speedily restored.

Having taken away the stone, Stella set out to rejoin his master at Trent, which he did after a dangerous journey. The Bishop had the precious relic enclosed in a case of silver, and was about to send it to Portugal when he was suddenly seized with a violent fever and his life was despaired of.

In his extremity the Bishop bethought him that our Lady might perhaps be displeased with him for having robbed her House. At once he promised to make amends if it were so,

and as he prayed it seemed as though he heard a voice from heaven bidding him restore the stone which he had taken away. Being uncertain whether this was real or only the imagination of a sick man, the Bishop still hesitated, and Stella, by order of his master, went to a convent in Trent, the inmates of which were in high reputation for sanctity, and asked them to pray that the Bishop might recover his health. After two days the following message came to him from the convent:—

“If the Bishop wishes to recover let him restore to the Virgin of Loreto what he has taken away.”

Stella was greatly surprised at these cloistered nuns having learned about the stone from Loreto. But the Bishop had now no longer any doubt as to the fault he had committed, and ordered Stella to return to Loreto at once, and to take back the stone. No sooner had the latter left the gate of the city than the Bishop began to recover, and the self-same moment that the stone was restored to its place the Bishop completely recovered his health.

All this was related by Stella himself to Father Riera, who was then at Loreto, and the same facts are related in a letter from the Bishop of Coimbra to the Governor of Loreto, begging him to exercise his power to preserve the Holy House. A copy of this letter is preserved at Loreto, and in 1839 it was compared with the original, which still exists in the Vatican Archives.

XIV.

Father W. A. Hutchison, of the Oratory, whose little work on Loreto and Nazareth has supplied us with some of the material of these papers, has left in a lecture an account of his visit to Nazareth in 1857, which he made with a view of examining the sanctuary there, in reference to attacks made against it by Professor Stanley.* We can scarcely do better than conclude with some extracts from this account, seeing that in this critical age, more confidence is placed in such researches than in those of earlier times,

* Now Dean of Westminster.

"My first visit," he says, "to Nazareth was in May 1857; in the August following I went to Loreto for the second time, my first visit having been in 1846. Having the benefit of an introduction to Mgr. Commisario, I was most kindly permitted by him to make every investigation of the Holy House. From Loreto I returned to Palestine, and was at Nazareth a second time in September, and I had again the happiness of visiting the Sanctuary there in the following June, while, a few weeks later, I was at Tersatto, near Fiume, on my way to England. I mention these details to show that, at least, I had ample opportunity of becoming acquainted with both Sanctuaries.

"When I was at Nazareth I made a plan of the Grotto, and with the help of it, I will now proceed to describe the present state of the Sanctuary.

"The Sanctuary of Nazareth is approached by a descent of fifteen marble steps from the nave of the present Church. Descending these fifteen steps, you enter a narrow, oblong chapel, called the Chapel of the Angel. It is

paved with marble, and has a groined roof in the Gothic style, but of late date. There are two altars in it—one dedicated to the Archangel Gabriel, and the other to SS. Joachim and Anna. The chapel is about twenty feet high. It stands in front of a grotto in the rock, and though *not exactly* of the same dimensions, it stands in the position of, and represents the Holy House of Loreto."

This discrepancy between the dimensions of the chapel at Nazareth and those of the Holy House of Loreto, has been the basis of objections against the genuineness of the latter. At page 93 of his pamphlet, Father Hutchison refutes both this and two others, which Professor Stanley makes against the identity of the Holy House of Loreto with that in which Our Lady dwelt at Nazareth.

"To this first objection," he says, "the answer is easy. It is not pretended that the Chapel of the Angel occupies precisely the same space as the Holy House formerly did. The ancient foundations of the Holy House, which must now lie to a great extent under the nave of the Church at Nazareth, were

discovered upwards of 200 years ago, when some repairs were being made there, and they were found to be precisely identical with the dimensions of the Holy House at Loreto. The account of this discovery is given in the 'Elucidatio Terræ Sanctæ,' by Quaresimus, which was published in 1639.

"Crossing the Chapel of the Angel, and descending two steps more, you enter the Chapel of the Annunziata. This chapel is formed within a cave of the rock, the sides and floor of which are cased with marble, but the roof is the natural rock. Immediately opposite the entrance is the Altar of the Annunciation; it is of white marble, open in front. On the back of the underpart of the altar are the words 'Verbum Caro factum est.' Five lamps are always burning under this altar, and three at the entrance to the Chapel. At this altar, by a special privilege, the Mass of the Annunciation is said daily, with Gloria and Credo, except on Pentecost, Easter, Christmas Day, and the Epiphany.

"At the gospel corner of the predella, stands, or rather hangs, the 'broken column.'

It is of red granite and ancient, and was placed here apparently to mark the spot where Our Lady, or the Angel, stood at the Annunciation. The Mahometans endeavoured to remove it in the end of the 17th century, but failed ; and the upper part, about ten feet in length, still remains suspended from the roof of the cave. Whether there is anything miraculous in this suspension, or whether it is merely natural, may be a question.

“The roof of the cave on one side of the column has at some time been broken away. It is to the stones used in repairing the roof at this spot that writers on Loreto no doubt allude when they say that they are similar to those of which the Holy House is built. From what I could see they precisely resembled those of Loreto, especially in their brick-like shape.

“Immediately behind the Altar of the Annunciation a wall has been built, which at present divides the cave in two parts. It contains an altar of the Flight into Egypt. This chapel would be perfectly dark but for a lamp burning before the altar.

“At the end of the cave opposite the altar is a low archway in the rock, about three and a half feet wide and six feet high: this leads to a narrow flight of stairs tunnelled in the rock, and which, like the ‘*Capella oscura*,’ is perfectly dark. Ascending ten of these steps you come to a landing, and turning at right angles you find the stairs continued. This leads into a small inner cave, called by some the kitchen of the Madonna. The staircase itself rises three steps more, and comes to a door which opens into a passage leading into the sacristy of the Church.

“This inner, or upper, cave is perfectly dark: on the right side as you enter there is a recess, which was in former times evidently closed with a door. There is a tradition at Nazareth that our Lady used to go out at this door to fetch water from the well.”

The hills round Nazareth, Father Hutchison goes on to say, are full of similar large caves, and he was told that many of the houses there opened into such caves. With great difficulty he succeeded in exploring one of these dwellings.

Two other objections made by Professor Stanley are thus refuted by the observations of Father Hutchison.

One objection is that the house of Loreto "was built of a dark red polished stone, wholly unlike anything in Palestine." It is true that there is a dark reddish tint over the greater part of the walls of Loreto, and some care is necessary to ascertain the real colour of the stones. The fact is, that from age, and from the smoke of the lamps which are perpetually burning in the Holy House, the stones have become almost black, and from the kisses of the pilgrims, to a certain height quite polished.

At the time of Clement VII., it was thought well to point the stones with mortar, so as to close up the interstices between the stones, that they might not be easily pulled out and carried away by the faithful. This mortar was made of the materials on the spot, that is, of the red volcanic stone of the neighbourhood, which, when pounded, makes an excellent cement. In some places this cement was applied in large pieces to the walls of

the Holy House, and might often be taken, on a cursory inspection, for the stone itself.

The real question as to the nature of the stones has been most satisfactorily cleared up by Mgr. Bartolini's investigation. Being a person of consideration in Rome, he obtained a permission to remove some small portions, and to have them analysed. He enclosed in separate papers specimens of stone which he had brought from Nazareth, also of two stones from the Holy House, which were in possession of the most eminent Cardinal Vicar, and some others which he himself removed from the walls of the Holy House. He sent them to Dr. Francesco Rutti, Professor of Chemistry at the Roman University, in order that he might analyse them. He gave him no indication of where they were taken from, but to prevent mistake he put the letters B.V.M. on the papers in which the stones of the Holy House were wrapped. The conclusion of the report runs thus:—

“ Having taken a portion from each of the four specimens, I submitted it to chemical analysis. It turns out that they are all of

the same nature, being all formed of carbonate of lime, carbonate of magnesia, and of ferruginous clay."

This is a most important testimony, for it is plain that the stone of the Holy House is limestone, identical with that of Nazareth, the stone of the neighbourhood of Loreto being volcanic. A further analysis proved that not only the stone, but the very mortar employed, was the same as that used in the ancient buildings of Nazareth.

Professor Stanley's third objection is, that if the House formerly abutted on the rock at Nazareth, in the way asserted, it must have blocked up the cave ; and to prove his objection, a very inaccurate plan appears to have been drawn of the cave. In this plan but one opening appears—that which communicated with the House itself. But there was, as we have seen, an ancient doorway on the east side of the upper cave, from whence our Lady used, it is said, to descend to draw water. This doorway may be distinctly traced, and a portion of the iron hinge or fastening may be seen.

Moreover, it is not at all certain that there was not a door in the house itself, at the time of its being a dwelling. Mgr. Bartolini says, "that there was, in all probability, a door on the west side underneath the window of the Angel, and states that some indications of a doorway may be traced in the wall. If this statement be correct, of course there is an end to the question. But," Father Hutchison adds, "I must say that, having gone to Loreto with the special end in view of finding the traces of an external ancient door, I saw nothing of the kind myself." But Father Hutchison does not consider it necessary that this should be proved. He inclines to believe that what is called the "Sagro Cammino," the chimney or fireplace behind the altar, was not a fireplace, but the original doorway of the house. And, in fact, chimneys are not common in Palestine, the poor people usually baking their bread and cooking their food in a hovel outside the house in which they live.

Father Hutchison finishes his interesting lecture by reminding us that we are not called

upon to prove, at the present day, the reality of the translation of the Holy House from Nazareth to Loreto. The authorities of the Church took abundant care to do this at the time the translation took place, as we have already narrated. And certainly the attacks recently made on the authenticity of the Holy House have tended to prove that the precautions then taken were amply sufficient for the purpose.

In itself the preservation of the Holy House was a very likely thing to happen. The early Christians would naturally reverence the spot where such wonderful mysteries had been accomplished, and would preserve it and hand it down to those who came after them. Nor is it unlikely that God Himself should interpose to preserve for the veneration of the faithful a house that He had so greatly honoured. He who loved Mount Sion, and chose it for His dwelling-place, could not have loved Nazareth less, and its transfer by angelic power across the seas to Italy is far less a wonder than that which was wrought in it when "the Angel of the

Lord announced unto Mary, and she conceived by the Holy Ghost."

XV.*

In these papers we have modestly attempted to give a simple account of the home of our Lady, and the miraculous circumstances relating to its presence amongst us to the present day. But after even such a recital it will be hardly a matter of surprise that so many of the Sovereign Pontiffs (Dr. Northcote, in his "Shrines of the Madonna," says forty-four out of sixty-five Popes who have filled the chair of St. Peter since the miraculous translation took place) should have given, in one way or another, their sanction to the story.

In 1471 Paul II. speaks of the house and image of the Blessed Virgin having been translated by a company of the angelic host, and that great and stupendous miracles had been wrought there by means of the same

* This concluding chapter is almost exclusively extracted from Dr. Northcote's "Shrines of the Madonna," from p. 99 to p. 106.

most merciful Virgin, "*as we in our own person have experienced.*" He also declares that it is a church miraculously supported. It will be remembered that Paul II. was cured of the plague there, and that our Lady appeared and announced to him that he would be chosen Pope.

Marcellus II. had a similar revelation whilst saying mass in the Holy House.

Clement VII. says that in his time many and great miracles were wrought daily in this place.

Leo X. and Paul III. say it is proved to be the very house in which the "Word was made Flesh and dwelt amongst us," by the testimony of persons worthy of belief.

Innocent XII. declares that it is proved by the voice of Popes, by the veneration of the whole world, by the continual operation of miracles and the outpouring of heavenly favours, to be in truth the house of the Blessed Virgin. St. Pius V. caused the Agnus Deis, consecrated by him, to be stamped with the representation of the Holy House, with this

inscription : "Vere domus florida quæ fuit in Nazareth."

Benedict XIV. enumerates, as the proof of its authenticity, ancient monuments, unbroken tradition, the declaration of Popes, the common belief of the faithful, and continual miracles.

Finally, Pope Pius IX., writing within a few weeks after his accession to the throne, and sending as an offering to the shrine of Loreto the pectoral cross and the ring which he had worn as bishop, says that he did so as a testimony to the greatness of that august and sacred building in which the Blessed Virgin had been saluted by the Angel, and through the operation of the Holy Ghost had become the Mother of God.

To these testimonies of the Popes must be added those of the Saints, very many of whom have been filled with a most tender and loving devotion to the Holy House, and experienced wonderful proofs of God's special blessing on that sacred spot. Thus St. Francis Xavier, when saying mass there, received an inspiration to devote himself to the

conversion of the East. St. Francis Borgia was suffering from fever when he set out on a pilgrimage to Loreto. As he approached the Holy House the fever diminished, and it disappeared the moment he reached it. St. James della Marca, at the age of thirty-three, was here delivered once for all from grievous temptations of the flesh, by which he had always before been sorely tried.

St. Cajetan came here twice for the express purpose of placing his new order of Regular Clerks under the protection of the Holy Mother. St. Francis Carraciolo spent two nights in this sanctuary, and received the assurance both of his companion's glory and of his own approaching death. St. Peter of Alcantara could never even speak of the Holy House without experiencing transports of unutterable sweetness. St. Joseph of Cupertino saw in a vision angels ascending and descending over it with their hands laden with gifts. B. Alexander Sauli, the Apostle of Corsica, St. Camillus of Lellis, St. Joseph Calasanctius, all testify to gifts and graces received from this heavenly fountain. To visit

it was a favourite devotion of St. Charles Borromeo. St. Stanislaus Kostka visited it on his flight from Poland to Rome ; and when praying there first began to experience those heavenly flames with which his heart was afterwards consumed. St. Aloysius was bound by his mother's vow before he was born to visit this sanctuary, and when he fulfilled it he spent well nigh a whole day upon his knees in the Holy House, receiving such ineffable consolations from God and our Lady that he used to melt into tears at the very recollection of them.

M. Olier, the founder of the seminary of St. Sulpice, was finally converted to God in this sanctuary. St. Francis of Sales went on foot from Rome to Loreto, and no sooner had he entered the Holy House than he was surprised by a flood of devout affections, and frequently kissed the walls which had been consecrated by the presence of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. He confessed and communicated there, and then dissolving in loving sighs, he began to cry out, "These then are thy tabernacles, O beautiful Spouse of the

Eternal King! Here then, O Divine Lover, Thou wert accustomed to remain looking through the lattices! Here Thou didst feed amidst lilies! Here Thou didst become my Brother!" He then renewed the vow of virginity which he had previously made in Paris.

But perhaps the greatest love and devotion to the sanctuary of Loreto was paid by the Blessed Benedict Joseph Labre. Indeed, his journeys to the Holy House were so frequent, and his behaviour there was so edifying, that he was called the Saint of Loreto.

We must not conclude without alluding to a class of miracles more numerous than any others with which the history of Loreto abounds. Everybody who has had the happiness of visiting this wondrous shrine bears testimony to the devotional effect of this sanctuary. Moreover, it has been constantly observed, both in older and later times, that there are few persons so utterly hardened in sin, but who, on entering this holy place, are conscious to themselves of a certain supernatural power, touching and softening their hearts, and

moving them to repentance. "Nothing is more common," says the blessed Peter Canisius, "than for strangers who come to this sanctuary with their souls dead in sin, stained with the blackest crimes, to awake to a consciousness of their guilt, and to lay bare their miserable condition to those experienced spiritual physicians whom the Church has provided here for those who need them. Those who but lately were living in open enmity with God and with their neighbour, come here and bury every feeling of envy, anger, and all uncharitableness; they are reconciled to their brethren: not unfrequently even doing public penance for their sins. They discharge their debts, forgive those who are in debt to them, restore what has been unjustly acquired, and, in a word, fulfil the whole law of charity."

We need not, then, hesitate to conclude with the same distinguished writer that, if truth and holiness be dear to us, we cannot but recognise and be thankful for the presence of the finger of God in thus honouring, to the consolation of the whole Church, the honour

paid to our Blessed Lady in this Sanctuary of Loreto. Let heretics say what they will, a tree which has taken such deep root, which has thrown out such high and spreading branches, and which has stood through so many generations, can have been planted only by the hand of God.



My Rosary Class.



MY ROSARY CLASS.



I.

I HAVE been told that the lessons I taught my Rosary class would be interesting to others besides my little class. I do not know how that may be, but if they are likely to be of service to any one I am quite willing to write them. I know that as a Tertiary of St. Dominic I am bound to assist in spreading the Rosary as much as I am able; it is a part of my vocation. But, besides this, I love my Rosary for its own sake, and no pleasure can be greater than to help in leading others to know and understand it better.

And so, if my Rosary class will help towards this end, I shall have been well repaid for the trouble of writing it.

"But," some will ask, "what is a Rosary class"? and I think that I ought to satisfy them, by telling them how it came to pass that I undertook to teach some children how to know and love the Rosary.

It was a lovely summer's evening in August, when I found myself sitting upon the sands of the little sea-side watering place of N——, on the south coast of England. I had been ordered to the sea on account of my health, and here I was, all alone for three months.

It was sunset, and the bright clouds reflected the thousand tinted hues of the opposite horizon, and the soft lullaby of the retreating tide sang sweetly on my ear.

Alone with God and His glorious creation, all the cares and worries of life behind me! Nothing to do but to think of Him, and speak to Him, and to spend myself in thanking Him, and in realising His being in the midst of scenes where all was nothing to me except as it reflected Him, and His beauty, and His great and glorious love! Oh, what a delicious prospect!

The book which I had been reading was

open in my hand, and I had stopped at the following passage :—

“ The wealth of the soul is God with the fulness of His sweetness ; the property of the flesh is the world with its attractions. But the world is outside us ; God is within. Nothing is more within us than God, nothing is more present to us than God ; He is in all things, for all things are in Him ; He is outside all things, for He is above them all. When, turning our back upon the world, we turn towards God and desire to rise out of the abyss of things created towards the uncreated, we must pass ourselves by. To rise to God is to enter into self, and not only that, but without quitting self it is to raise self in an unspeakable manner above self. He who truly enters into himself, and who passes by his own interior in order to raise himself above himself, he truly raises himself towards God. Let us then withdraw our heart, and close it to the distractions of the world, and recall it to interior joys. And if we cannot entirely master our heart, at all events let us preserve it from unlawful and

vain thoughts, so that, at least from time to time, we may fix it in the light of Divine contemplation. For the repose of our hearts consists in having our desires fixed in God under the law of the Divine love; and the love of our hearts consists in contemplating God, and in being sweetly nourished by this Divine contemplation."

I had been sitting in my rocky nook nearly all the day, occupying my fingers at rare intervals for the sake of not being altogether idle, but really and simply drinking in health, allowing my mind to follow its natural course, which is a dreamy one.

All at once I heard a sob not far from where I sat. On looking up I saw a pretty child, with beautiful fair hair tied back with a ribbon, weeping as if her heart would break. Her hat had fallen on the sand, and I saw at once that she had escaped from home or from her companions in order to give vent to her sorrow.

I can never see trouble without wishing to share it, and, if possible, to give the relief of sympathy. So I gathered my things

together, and went and sat down by the weeping child. I said nothing for some time, but quietly stole my arm round her little waist and let her weep on. She did not seem to notice me at first, but after a time she looked up timidly through her tears.

"Dear child, do not cry—tell me what it is all about; perhaps I can help you!"

She looked up again, and her lips quivered as she tried to speak. The expression of my face seemed to give her confidence, for she laid her own against my shoulder and sobbed hysterically.

"Trouble is sent us by God, my darling; God is love, and He can make all bright again."

"I know," she said; "but oh! it is breaking mother's heart."

"What is your name, dear?" I said, thinking to make a little diversion.

"My name is Anne O'Connor, and my father keeps the tobacconist shop in the High Street."

"O'Connor!" I said slowly; "then you are a Catholic, my child?"

"Oh yes—I am a Catholic, and I have been asking our Lady all day that it should not be; but she has not heard me, and Willie is gone, gone, gone! and mother is breaking her heart."

Again the little heart broke down in its deep sympathy for her mother, and I allowed her to cry till she could cry no more. At the same time I drew my Rosary from my side, and began myself to offer it to our Lady, the "Consolatrix Afflictorum," and asked her to show me in what way I could best help this little lamb to bear her grief.

The sound of the beads seemed to recall her. She looked up and said, "Are you a Catholic too, ma'am?—may we say the beads together, for mother and poor Willie?"

She drew instinctively closer to me, and put her arm confidingly through mine.

"We can do nothing better, Anne," I said, "and then, when we have asked our sweet Holy Mother to help us, you will tell me all about it, and we will see what else can be done."

"I don't think anything can be done,

ma'am, but praying ; and I think I can pray better if you will pray with me."

She drew her own Rosary from her pocket, and we recited the sorrowful mysteries together in the following manner :—

"By the sorrowful mystery of the Agony of thy Divine Son, Jesus Christ our Lord—

Our Lady, Spouse of the Holy Ghost,
Queen of Intercessors, pray for us.

"By the sorrowful mystery of the scourging of thy Divine Son, Jesus Christ our Lord—

Our Lady, Spouse of the Holy Ghost,
Queen of Intercessors, pray for us.

"By the sorrowful mystery of the crowning with thorns of thy Divine Son, Jesus Christ Our Lord—

Our Lady, Spouse of the Holy Ghost,
Queen of Intercessors, pray for us.

"By the sorrowful mystery of the Way of the Cross—

Our Lady, Spouse of the Holy Ghost,
Queen of Intercessors, pray for us.

"By the sorrowful mystery of the three hours' agony and death upon the Cross of thy Divine Son, Jesus Christ our Lord—

Our Lady, Spouse of the Holy Ghost,
Queen of Intercessors, pray for us."


Anne had never recited her Rosary in this

manner before, and I observed that her countenance became almost rapt, as with closed eyes she followed the thoughts I suggested. The Rosary concluded, my little companion was quite calm, and as she looked into my face and thanked me in her simple childlike fashion, I thought I had seldom seen a more beautiful or devout expression on any face.

Her little story was soon told. Her brother, a headstrong boy of fourteen, had broken away from parental restraint, and that very day had gone to sea, they did not know whither.

"I know," she said simply, "that our Lady will not leave caring for him, because mother is so good; but then mother is ill, and perhaps she may not live to see him come home again, when he is sorry and wants to be forgiven."

We both sat in silence for some time, watching the fading lights upon the sea. I felt that this child could almost teach me, and that I could do more by my silence than by any words. At last I said—



"Don't you think your mother will want you, Anne? It is getting late."

She looked up once more with that sweet seriousness I had observed before, and at once tied on her hat.

"May I come to you again another time, ma'am?" she said, as she lingered and reluctantly prepared to go.

"Certainly, dear child," and then a sudden thought struck me, and I added: "Come at sunset, and we will say the Rosary together whenever you like for mother and poor Willie."

A bright smile lighted up the child's face.

"And may I come every night?"

"I am always here in the evening, Anne; so you may come whenever you like."

"And you will pray for Willie, will you not?—when you are in church, I mean?"

"I will pray for him every day before the Blessed Sacrament, when I can be there at holy Mass."

"Oh, thank you!" exclaimed the child, her sorrow seeming to give way before the joy of the unexpected sympathy. "Our

Lady will hear you, for I know you love her dearly."

She sprang to her feet, and in a few moments her light little figure was gone from me.

Once more alone, yet not without something more to love for God's sake.

And a duty—a sweet duty of love—the love of a soul, and the love of a sinner for God's sake, and the one duty of all duties, the sweetest, the duty of intercession, and of union with our Lady's work in that gracious work of hers, that work which began at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, and which will never end until sin and sorrow and want shall be no more !

II.

My little friend, Anne O'Connor, was true to her tryst. The following evening, and many evenings after, she found me out, and we recited the Rosary together in honour of our Lady, the "Consoler of the Afflicted;" and every evening the child's soul drew

nearer to mine, giving and receiving that most beautiful of all sympathies, which it is not in the power of words to express, but which we know comes from God and lives in Him, and goes back to Him again.

We had thus formed a little holy friendship of about a fortnight's standing, when one evening, after finishing our prayer, she said to me—

“Sister, might I bring another child to you? She wishes to come very much, and say the Rosary with us. I said, ‘No’ at first, because”——

Sister Teresa. Because why, dear child?

Anne. Well, sister, because it is so very pleasant to be here alone, and to talk with you all by myself. But I afterwards thought it wrong to be so selfish, and Alice is so very good, far more than I am, sister. I am sure you will love her.

Sister Teresa. Is Alice a great friend of yours?

Anne. Alice May is an orphan; she is a little older than me—about fifteen. She is learning a business with a cousin of hers, but

it was mother who brought her up after her mother died.


Sister Teresa. Then she is like a sister to you?

Anne. Yes ; we have always been to school together, and we made our first Communion together ; we are preparing for Confirmation now, and I hope we shall be confirmed at Whitsuntide when the Bishop comes. She would like to come very much ; she really is a good child, sister ; mother says so, and mother knows.

Sister Teresa. Of course, Anne, we must not refuse her ; it will make our prayers all the stronger if we are united. You know our Lord has even promised that if we will only unite together in asking for what we want, our Father in heaven will grant it.

Anne. I never thought of that before, sister. Then do you think if more of us joined we should be *more* sure of getting what we want ?

I could scarcely help smiling at the earnest, eager way in which she put this question, and I asked her why she was so anxious to know.



"Because, sister," she replied, "Alice isn't the only one. I only asked for her because I know mother thinks she is very good ; and she is like my sister, and so I did not like to refuse. But there is Cicely Morgan and Mary McKenna—we are all special friends, sister—and I know they would like to come if you gave them leave. I don't care much for any one else, but only those three. If they might all come, it would be quite a little class, sister, and then, you see, our Lady would have all those more Hail Marys said in her honour."

Of course I gave the leave she asked, and, in consequence, the following evening I was one of a little circle, all bent on being devout to our Lady, and on getting those graces at her hands which the Holy Ghost bestows so freely through her for her children's sake.

It was Saturday, and we recited the glorious mysteries, as we had before said the sorrowful mysteries, in the following manner—

"By the glorious Resurrection of thy Divine

Son, Jesus Christ our Lord ; by thy first meeting with Him in His glorified sacred humanity ; by the bursting of His prison bars, and the joy of the holy women and the Apostles—

Our Lady, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, Queen of Intercessors, pray for us.

“By the glorious and triumphal ascension of thy Divine Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, in thy presence, and in that of His Apostles ; by His last sweet blessing ; by the entrance of His glorified humanity into the presence of God in heaven ; and by His glorious sitting at the right hand of the Father—

Our Lady, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, Queen of Intercessors, pray for us.

“By the glorious descent of the Holy Ghost the Comforter upon thyself and the Apostles on the day of Pentecost ; by the tongues of fire which stood upon each of them ; and by the ever-abiding presence of the Holy Ghost, thy Divine Spouse, within the Church, guiding her in truth until the end of time—

Our Lady, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, Queen of Intercessors, pray for us.

“By thy glorious assumption into heaven on the third day after thy death ; and by thy glorious entrance into the presence of God, leaning upon thy Beloved—

Our Lady, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, Queen of Intercessors, pray for us.

“By thy glorious coronation, and by the crowns of glory which thou didst then receive at the hands of the ever Blessed Trinity, whom thou didst ever faithfully serve and love, and by thy life of bliss in the light of God—

Our Lady, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, Queen of Intercessors, pray for us.”

When our prayer was concluded, we were all very silent. The sea was perfectly calm, and reflected the dying rays of an unusually brilliant sunset. Anne was in her place by my side, and the others sat a little apart. I believe the thoughts of our meditation were uppermost in each child's soul, for a peculiar seriousness, bright but quiet, was on each young face. None seemed inclined to speak, until Anne broke the silence by saying—

“Is it not wonderful, sister, that we, sitting here, saying our beads, should be able to do anything for Willie, who is most likely so far off, not knowing anything about it?”

“It is God's way,” I replied, “and therefore

it is not surprising, though I acknowledge it is wonderful."

"Do you know, sister, mother says her Rosary always at the same time that we do. She has a little time of an evening when work is done, and she says that every little will help."

Sister Teresa. Is she better in health, Anne?

Anne. Not much better—she never will be *that*; but she says she did not believe she could have borne parting with Willie as she has done. She says she feels a strange comfort every time she touches her Rosary, so she has put it round her neck.

Sister Teresa. I make no doubt. The Rosary is a very powerful prayer, and I daresay it is our Lady's intention to show that she is pleased with your devotion and with hers.

Anne. Do *you* feel sure, too, that all will be well for my brother?

Sister Teresa. With such a mother to pray for him, dear child, I can hardly doubt it. Perhaps, after all, it will not *only* be well,

but *far better* than well. There are some souls whom God sees it best to allow to go wrong, so that, getting punished now, they are stopped before it is too late.

There was another little pause, which Mary broke by saying—

“May I ask you a question, sister?”

Sister Teresa. Certainly.

Mary. You said the Rosary was a very powerful prayer; why is it?

Sister Teresa. It is our Lady's own devotion. She gave it herself, for a very great purpose; she has bound herself therefore to listen to it—just as though a king were to give a person a ring, and promise to grant every petition which was offered upon producing the ring.

Alice. I shall call the Rosary our Lady's wedding-ring. Isn't that a beautiful name for it?

Anne. Yes; for a ring marries people, and makes them one; so if we wear our Lady's ring, we are one with her.


Sister Teresa. I only said that to explain my meaning better. The Rosary is called

our Lady's chaplet, and a chaplet means a wreath—a crown of flowers, or of jewels. Whenever we say the Rosary well, we do more than wear her ring; we make a crown for her which she wears, and so she is obliged to hear us on that account.

Cicely. I like the crown best. When I say my Rosary, I will ask our Lady to let it be a crown of lilies.

Anne. But it is a crown of roses, Cicely; *that* is why it is called the Rosary—isn't it, sister?

Sister Teresa. That is its usual meaning. Our Lady has often appeared to her devout servants, clothed in red and white roses, when they have recited the holy Rosary well. But mystical things have many meanings. There is a beautiful legend, which I will tell you, on this subject. In the thirteenth century the devotion began of repeating many times the Ave Maria in our Lady's honour. The favourite number of times was fifty, or else three times fifty. That, you know, is the number of aves which we say on each chaplet, or on the whole Rosary of fifteen decades.



Now, the following little story is taken from a very ancient manuscript.*

“Sister Beli, of Lutisbach, had a very great devotion towards the sweet Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. She was in the habit of consecrating to her honour, daily, three times fifty aves. Our dear Lady willed to show her how much this service of hers was pleasing to her. One day that Sister Beli was lying in the infirmary, sick upon her bed, she saw the apparition of the most beautiful Lady that human eyes had ever beheld. She was clothed in a garment as white and dazzling as the snow, and with a most gracious familiarity, she seated herself on the edge of the bed. The happy sister was struck with admiration at the sight of such marvellous beauty, and she asked the vision who she might be. Then the sweet servant of the Lord made herself known, saying: ‘I am the Mother of Paradise, whom thou hast honoured; and this dress which I wear, and

* *Liber asceticus et vitæ Monialium in Töesz.* MS. 463 of the Library of St. Gall.

which is of such exceeding whiteness, thou hast thyself woven by means of the angelic salutations which have fallen so devoutly from thy lips.' Then did the happy sister feel herself inundated with a heavenly joy, such as cannot be expressed."

Mary. That is a beautiful story, sister. It makes one wish to be devout, but I don't think I ever shall be.

Sister Teresa. Why not?

Mary. I say my Rosary because I am used to it, but I never *think* about being devout to our Lady.

Cicely. Sister, couldn't you teach us.

Sister Teresa. What, my child?

Cicely. How to be devout to our Lady.

Sister Teresa. There is only One who can teach you that, Cicely.

The child coloured and looked up, but did not ask in words, and I went on: "It is very little we can do by words; the teaching of a man clears the understanding, but it does not give devotion."

Cicely. Who *does*, then, sister?

I paused a moment, because I felt that

what I desired to say was of consequence ; then I replied, very slowly—

“*He* who filled our Lady full of grace.”

The children all turned to me at once, for this was a new way of looking at everything. I continued—

“Devotion is a gift of the Holy Ghost, and we must begin by serving *Him* if we desire to grow in any solid devotion whatever.”

Cicely. Then will you teach us about *that*, sister ?

Sister Teresa. I will do my best, but you see that the sun is long since set, and it is time for us all to turn towards home. Let us once more all say the angelic salutation for a holy night’s rest, and then you must go.

III.

Punctually as the clock struck eight the following evening, the four children joined me on the sands. As they approached, I could not help remarking the unusual prettiness, I might almost say beauty, of the

picture they formed. Alice May, Annie's foster sister, was the tallest and the most decidedly beautiful of the four. Her complexion was a clear brown, and she had brown liquid eyes which spoke far more than her voice, for whilst the others chatted she was silent, and seemed more willing to listen than to speak. Annie was beautifully fair, as I have said, with blue loving eyes, and the fair golden hair which brightens in the sunlight. Cicely, the youngest, was lively and somewhat restless, eager and anxious to be taught. Not exactly pretty, for her features were irregular and her complexion bad, but the warmth of intelligence which kindled in her grey eye, and drank in every word, made up for every other deficiency of natural beauty. Mary, again, was less graceful in figure than the rest, but her well shaped forehead, and earnest, inquiring eyes,—large, but not particularly fine, showed a power of thought and active intellect, which in another sphere of life would probably make itself felt by others. Here, then, is the picture of my Rosary class,—of four

little souls wishing to expand, and grow in the light of the love of God.

What a lovely age that is, when it is yet unspoiled! How little heed is apparently given to the opening flower!—and alas, how many souls are dwarfed just for lack of the care they need and the balance which is wanted, when the intellect is pressed and religion is made a routine, and the soul expands only to receive impressions from without, and the world and self take the place of God, before it has learned to realise who God is!

The children approached with the happy smile of real enjoyment and expectation, and then arranged themselves in a semicircle in front of me.

“Why do you turn your backs on the sea, children?” I said; “are you tired of it already?”

“We are used to the sea, sister,” said Anne, “and we can listen better—you don’t mind?”

“I can understand better if I may see your face when you are speaking, sister,”

added Cicely, "and you are going to teach us to-day, you know."

"Am I, dear child? I did not know that. What have I promised, now, to teach you?"

"How to get devotion through the Holy Ghost. I want so much to know, and so do all of us."

"But we haven't said our Rosary yet," said Anne, "that comes first, you know."

"We say the joyful mysteries to-day," I replied.

"May we say them as we always do, sister?" asked Anne.

And we began—

By the joyful mystery of the angel's message, and thy overshadowing by the Holy Ghost; by thy loving obedience to the will of the Eternal Father; by the wonderful incarnation of the Eternal Son—

Our Lady, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, Queen of Intercessors, pray for us.

By the joyful mystery of thy visit to thy cousin, Saint Elizabeth; by the grace of sanctification which thou didst carry to the infant John, yet unborn; by the Divine charity which filled thy heart, when thou didst magnify the Lord for all His gifts of grace to thee—

Our Lady, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, Queen of Intercessors, pray for us.

By the joyful mystery of the birth of thy Divine Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, in a poor stable at Bethlehem ; by thy love of holy poverty, and by the ecstasy which filled thy heart, when thou didst press thy child, and thy God, to thy heart—

Our Lady, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, Queen of Intercessors, pray for us.

By the joyful mystery of the presentation of thy Divine Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, in the Temple ; by the wonderful gift thou wert able to offer to God, no less than God Himself ; and by the perfection of thy obedience to the will of God—

Our Lady, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, Queen of Intercessors, pray for us.

By the joyful mystery of the finding of thy Divine Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, after losing Him for three days ; by His love of His Father's service ; and by His perfect obedience and submission to thee—

Our Lady, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, Queen of Intercessors, pray for us.

“How plain it makes everything,” said Mary, after a pause, “saying the Rosary like that. It is like reminding our Lady, instead of only reminding ourselves.”

"That is the reason I say it so for you," I replied. "Our Lady likes to be reminded by us of things she knows and loves so well, and which are always in her mind—and I think it is a very simple way of making a meditation."

Anne. I always loved my Rosary, though I don't know why; but I never quite understood how to meditate. I think I understand better now we have said it so often in that way.

"But now won't you teach us how to be devout, sister?" persisted Cicely. "I do so want to know how to be so in the best way."

"The best way of becoming devout, Cicely, is to desire it very earnestly. Do you know why you desire it?"

The child thought, but looked puzzled, and Alice answered for her.

"I suppose, sister, it is the Holy Ghost Himself who puts the desire into her heart."

"Yes, Alice, that is what I meant, and of course if the Holy Ghost gives us a *desire*, it is very clear He means to give us the grace."

"Why can't He give us the grace at once?" asked Mary.

"He *can*, Mary, for He can do all things, but He generally requires us to do something ourselves before He gives us great graces."

"What is that, sister?"

"He requires us to co-operate, that is, to work *with* Him. Now, He begins by giving you a desire. What, then, must you do next?"

"I suppose," replied Cicely, "that I must ask Him to *give* me what He makes me to desire."

"Yes. Many people seem to think it is enough to have good desires and good feelings, but will not take the trouble to cultivate them. God wishes us to take trouble in order that we may merit, and though it is really He who does all, yet, if we are idle, and do not watch for His graces, in order to act upon them, we shall lose them, and be far worse than we were before."

"But," said Mary, "I thought, sister, you said that God must *teach* us devotion. We

can't be devout if He does not make us. I don't think I can *ever* feel devout. I mean, I can't *make myself* feel."

"Truly, Mary," I replied, "no one can make himself say or do, or feel anything that is good, except by the Holy Ghost, but we may be devout without exactly *feeling* devotion."

"How, sister?"

"Devotion is an act of the will; sensible devotion is only a physical effect, which God may give or not, and is independent of solid devotion."

"Sister," here broke in Alice, "what is it that one feels after Holy Communion sometimes, and sometimes before the Blessed Sacrament, as if one could not speak one word or do anything at all, but only feel? Is not that being devout?"

I looked with interest at the child, she had spoken so earnestly, and was so anxiously waiting my reply.

"God is very good, Alice, and He lets us feel the effects of our devotion by His own love, as it were, brimming over into our hearts.

I think when we feel like that it is rather God's love for us than our love for Him that we are sensible of."

Cicely. Do you think it is the Holy Ghost who makes any one feel like that?

Sister Teresa. Do you not know that the person of God, the Holy Ghost, is the mutual love of God the Father and God the Son? God the Holy Ghost *is* the love of God, and when we have sensible devotion it is, I should think, the love of God acting on our bodily senses, rather than any particular act of ours towards God. God is always raising us up, and what we have to do is to keep looking to Him and leaning upon Him, and letting Him do just what He likes with us.

Cicely. But is there anything we can *do*, that the Holy Ghost may make us feel devout?

Sister Teresa. We should not desire to *feel* devout, or, at least, we should not seek it. It is enough that we should *be* devout without feeling it. The *feeling* of devotion is like a reward which God gives us sometimes to encourage us. But we may *be* devout always.

Mary. Then, what is being devout, sister?

Sister Teresa. Devotion is nothing else but to be always ready to do the will of God, and it is the Holy Ghost who makes us always prepared to do what He requires of us.

Cicely. Sister, what prayers ought we to say to the Holy Ghost to get devotion?

Sister Teresa. There are two beautiful hymns which the Church has always been accustomed to use in order to ask the grace of the Holy Ghost, and you certainly cannot do better than to say them. They are the *Veni Creator*, and the *Veni Sancte Spiritus*.

Cicely. But they are in Latin, sister, are they not? And I don't understand Latin.

Sister Teresa. You may say them in English, if you like. They are both translated, and you will find them in nearly every prayer book. The *Veni Creator* is very often sung in English; it begins: "Come, Holy Ghost, Creator, come."

Cicely. Oh yes, I know! We have been singing it after the instructions for confirmation.

Sister Teresa. For my part I like better to say them in Latin. For I love everything

that belongs especially to the Church, and I love to use the words which the saints have said, the very words themselves. But that is only my own little feeling, the prayer is just as good if every one says it as he knows it best.

It was now time that we should separate, so we knelt down and said the *Salve Regina* before parting for the evening.

IV.

The next evening found us again in our nook on the sands, and after saying the Rosary as usual, Mary began our conversation at once by saying: "Will you tell us, sister, how people first began to think of saying the Rosary? Was it taught them by the apostles?"

"That is a very sensible question," I replied, "and I will very gladly tell you all I know. We can hardly imagine people without the Rosary, can we?"

Anne. I am sure I can't. How did they ever get on, I wonder?

Sister Teresa. Yet it is very certain, Anne,

that there was a time in the history of the Church when there was not only no Rosary, but no special devotions as we have at present.

Cicely. Not even the Sacred Heart, sister?

Sister Teresa. Not even that, dear: the devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Lord has only been practised for about two hundred years. I think you must surely remember Blessed Margaret, Mary?

Alice. Yes, I know all about that—it was at Paray le Monial, and she was a nun of the Order of the Visitation.

Sister Teresa. I will try and explain. In the very early days of Christianity, while yet the teaching of the apostles and the saints who succeeded them shed, as it were, a sweet perfume into the hearts of the converts, we can readily understand how they were drawn by the Holy Ghost to desire union with God and that separation from the world which is necessary for such Divine union, and their faith was clear, simple, and undoubting.

Mary. Do you think God was nearer to them than He is to us, sister?

"No," I replied; "but there were fewer clouds in their souls to hide Him. If we do not see God, it is not because *He* is not to be seen, but because our sight is obscure."

Alice. That is why we ask for light, is it not, sister?

"We must remove the impediment," I replied, "before light can come into the soul. God is Light."

Cicely. And how did those first Christians pray, sister, if they had no devotions?

Sister Teresa. I did not say they had no devotions, but not that kind of devotions which are necessary for people generally now. Devotions are helps to union with God, and where union is perfect, devotions, so called, become unnecessary.

Alice. But, sister, is it not very presumptuous in such as we, thinking about union with God? What can *we* do to deserve it?

"Nothing," I replied, "we never can deserve it. But since it is the will of God, and He created us for this purpose, we must not only think about it, but desire it above all things, and *before* all things. It is the

very object of prayer and of devotion to unite our will with the will of God—to kindle love in our hearts, the love which unites.”

Cicely. How did those first Christians get to know how to pray, sister ?

Sister Teresa. The Holy Ghost came down at Pentecost upon the Apostles, and not only upon them but in a very sensible manner upon many of the Christians who were converted by their teaching. Many of the mysteries of the faith were known to our Lady alone, and she who was so full of the Holy Ghost, was able to teach the Apostles all about them. The mystery of the Incarnation, and that of the Visitation, and the Sanctification of St. John the Baptist before he was born ; also all the Mysteries of the Nativity, the beautiful legends of the Shepherds and the Magi, the Angelic Hymn. You know the *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, also the Canticles of the Magnificat, and the Benedictus, were all known to our Lady only, and to no one else who was likely to be able to give a clear account of them. Her words

and explanations would be very beautiful, and all that the Apostles taught, with the fire of the Holy Ghost upon their lips, would be sure to draw souls in a very wonderful way to God, and they would seek Him from the very burning desire which would be in their hearts. There would be no need to give them special devotions; their whole souls were aflame with love of God.

Mary. One can fancy what wonderful sermons St. Peter would preach, sister; or St. John, who leaned upon our Lord's Sacred Heart.

"Indeed, it is possible to imagine with what eloquence the remembrance of the sight of our Lord's sufferings would inspire St. Peter. Then we know, after our Lord's ascension, He taught them Himself what to do, and how to found the Church; and gave them all the rules, and most likely the very form of celebrating holy Mass. Everything about the Apostles and the early days of the Church, especially while our Lady lived, was full of supernatural life. The world was very wicked, but the Church was very simple; and the simple childlike love of the souls that

God called out of the world into the Church, drove multitudes to live in the deserts, that there they might enjoy the thought of God, and live always in the thought of the mysteries of redemption."

Mary. I like to think about those old hermits in the desert. It seems so wonderful that people should go right away from all they love.

Sister Teresa. I don't think so, Mary, not if you love something else ever so much better. It was the wickedness of the world which drove them away; and I suppose that they felt there was nothing worth living for, and they could not somehow help those clouds coming between them and God, when they were surrounded by worldliness and sin. And so they went away to be quiet, and God spoke to their souls. And when once God speaks lovingly to the soul, it can find no peace in anything out of Him. Everything else loses its value. All the comforts and conveniences of life, the love of creatures, the desire of fame, and even the body itself becomes subject to the heavenly

desires of the soul, and God becomes all in all. This, children, is union with God.

Anne drew a long breath after I had spoken. I saw the tears in her eyes. We were silent, for they seemed all alike impressed with the thoughts which had been suggested. At last she said, "Sister, can't we possibly please God and love those who belong to us too?"

Sister Teresa. Most assuredly, Anne, we shall not please Him better by not loving those we ought to love. The soul does *not* love less because it loves *in* God—for God's sake; but rather more. Only, the strong love of God has always a tendency to detach the soul from that kind of love which makes us long so much for the consolation of creatures, whoever they may be. The soul that is united to God quite perfectly, finds no rest or consolation out of God; but it does not for that reason cease to be natural.

Cicely. Will you go on about how the Rosary began, sister?

Sister Teresa. No one knows exactly when the use of what is called iterated prayer began.

We know, however, that it was a very ancient custom, and dates back historically to those very times of which we have been speaking. We read of St. Paul, the first hermit, that making a practice of reciting three hundred times a day the same form of prayer, he counted them by means of the same number of little pebbles which he drew successively from his bosom. It was the usual way of calculating in the East.

Mary. How do you mean, sister?

Sister Teresa. Calculation was carried out by means of pebbles threaded upon a string. There were different kinds of these calculating strings. Some corresponded to units, some to tens, some to hundreds, and so forth. This method was used in the most distant times by the Tartars and Chinese; and it is equally found amongst the Peruvians and Mexicans on the other side of the world. Then followed the use of strings of large and small beads, the smaller of which marked the units, and the larger ones the tens. The Brahmins of the Indies make use of a thread of pearls in order to enumerate the names of

their god Vishnu. So you see the plan of connecting prayers with beads strung in certain numbers is a very ancient one indeed.

Mary. But how did things used in the East come to be used in Europe, sister ?

Sister Teresa. Most likely by means of commerce ; and perhaps the crusaders had something to do with bringing over a custom which they found very convenient. At all events, there is no doubt that the calculating instruments of the East appeared in Europe during the Middle Ages, as helps to devotion.

Mary. This is very interesting, sister, please go on.

Sister Teresa. I think it must be *please good-bye*. We have had a very long talk to-night, and I think it looks very much as if we should have rain.

Cicely. I am so sorry, for you have not told us one word about the Rosary yet.

Alice. Sister has told us a great many things to think about, Cicely. We must thank her very much : it is very good of her to take so much trouble.

"I am sure sister *likes* it too, because she likes us to be happy," replied Cicely, turning to me with an arch look in her bright face.

Sister Teresa. But I shall not like to see you get wet. There, that is the first drop of the shower. We have only time for one "Hail, Mary," and then, good-night, dear children, and run home quickly.

V.

For some days the weather was thundery and the evenings wet, so that I did not meet my young friends as usual. But at length it cleared up, and I was able to go on the sands. The children had been impatiently waiting for our meetings to begin again, and I soon found them gathered around me.

When we had finished saying the Rosary, Cicely said at once, "Now, please, sister, will you begin?"

"May I ask just one question first?" said Mary.

"Certainly," I replied. "What is it?"

"You don't always use the same words before each mystery of the Rosary. Sometimes you remind our Lady of one thing, and sometimes of another; sometimes you ask for one virtue or favour, and then another. May we do so too?"

"Of course you may," I answered: "the Rosary is full of variety, and that is one of its great beauties. We may meditate upon it as long as we please, and we shall always find something new in it, and be able to make some new application of it according to the needs of the moment."

Anne. But I never can think about all these things when I say my Rosary, unless I have a book.

Sister Teresa. And that is the use of our prayer-books. They remind us of things that we should otherwise never think of. But, as you grow older, and read and meditate, you will be better able to dwell upon such holy thoughts without the help of a book. Meanwhile, we must all do our best, when we say our Rosary, to remember the different scenes connected with the mysteries

of our Lord's life, with the intention of praising God and honouring our blessed Lady.

Cicely. And now, dear sister, will you tell us some more about the history of the Rosary?

Sister Teresa. Well, during these wet days I have been thinking about it a good deal, and have written down a few things on the subject which I think will interest you.

The children gathered more closely around me, and looked up into my face with eager interest as I drew a paper from my pocket and prepared to read. Surely it would have been hard to find more sympathetic hearers than those who were so eagerly listening to my words. I read as follows—

I have told you that in the very early ages of the Church there were no special devotions as we have now. These devotions have arisen in later times, one by one, as the circumstances of the times gave occasion for them, and as the Holy Ghost inspired them into devout souls.

One cause of such devotions was the long and earnest meditations of holy men on

the truths of the Faith, and especially on the Incarnation of our Lord. Thus, many things concerning these mysteries became familiar to Christians which at first were hardly noticed. This is why, for example, St. Joseph is so much more honoured in our own day than he was in former times. From constant meditation on the infancy of our Lord, Catholics have come to understand much more clearly than of old the importance of his office with regard to our Lord.

Another cause of these devotions was the heresies which from time to time have arisen to combat our holy faith. These heresies drew attention to the special doctrines which they denied, and thus Catholics came to dwell more upon them. It was in this way that the error of Nestorius about our Divine Lord drew attention to the truth that the Blessed Virgin is the Mother of God; before that time it was not the custom to call her by that title, but ever since then it has been most commonly and universally applied to her.

Both these causes prepared the way for the Holy Rosary.

Here I paused in my reading, and asked, "Do any of you know when the Holy Rosary began?"

"I know," answered Mary, "that it was St. Dominic who began the Rosary, but I do not quite know when St. Dominic lived."

"I think I have heard," said Anne, "that St. Dominic lived about six hundred years ago."

"You are quite right. St. Dominic died rather more than six hundred and fifty years ago, and it was some years before his death that he began to preach the Rosary." I then continued my reading.

It was in the beginning of the 13th century that the Rosary took its rise.

For nearly twelve hundred years the faithful had been meditating upon the mystery of the Incarnation of our Lord, and Christians now realised it in a more vivid manner than they had ever done before. The words of the Angel's salutation to Mary, "Hail, full of grace," had now become familiar to men's

minds, and they had acquired the habit of using them as a part of their accustomed prayers. Evidently, devout souls were now ready to make profitable use of a devotion which placed the whole story of the Incarnation before their minds, and which put the Angelic salutation in a systematised form upon their lips. The faithful were prepared to say the Rosary.

But the thirteenth century was also a time when heresies flourished far and wide, and drew innumerable souls from the faith of Christ. Something was wanted to keep the faith fresh and clear in the minds of the children of the Church, to keep them from being drawn into heresy, and to familiarise with the truth the minds of those who were converted from error. Books would have been of no use for the purpose, for the thirteenth century was not a time when everybody could read; besides, printing did not exist as yet, and books were rare even with those who could read. Therefore the Holy Ghost provided the Church with the Holy Rosary; it was just what was

needed, as that which God gives us always is.

Here I lifted my eyes a moment from my paper. Cicely took advantage of the break to ask a question.

"Then, sister, was it the Holy Ghost Himself who invented the Rosary?"

"There is no doubt whatever that it was," I replied; "the Holy Scripture tells us that every good and perfect gift is from above, and comes down to us from the Father of Lights. Besides, it is the special office of the Holy Ghost to dwell in the Church, and provide it with all that it needs for the salvation of souls."

"Yes, of course," said the child, "I see that it must be so. The Holy Ghost always inspires the Church in what it does."

God chose two instruments to give to the Church the devotion of the Holy Rosary. The first of these is she whose maternal love for the souls of men made her the most fitting channel for a gift that was to contribute so mightily to their sanctification. It was especially fitting that our Lady should be

the means of making known the Rosary, which is the great devotion of the Incarnation, because she had been the means by which the Incarnation itself had been brought about. It was she, too, who had made known to the Apostles and Evangelists all the particulars relating to the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, and other mysteries of the Rosary, and hence she was the most proper person to make known the way in which these mysteries were to be commemorated and dwelt upon, as they are in the Rosary.

The other instrument by whom God chose to give the Rosary to His Church was St. Dominic.

From his very infancy St. Dominic was given to prayer and contemplation. By constant meditation his soul must have been filled with the knowledge of the mysteries of our Lord's life, passion, and glory; so that they were, no doubt, more real and familiar to him than the events which happened before his eyes. No man was ever more fitted to establish the devotion of the Rosary.

He was already a middle-aged man when God's providence brought him into the southern parts of France, where heresy was at that time raging. He began to preach the faith, and travelled about from place to place all over the country, confirming the Catholic in their holy religion, and persuading the heretics to give up their errors. For several years he persevered in his apostolic labours, through innumerable hardships and contradictions. There was no man who knew better how greatly some means was needed to make the faith known and loved in those parts.

You see that we have now gathered together all the elements necessary to explain how the Rosary came to exist.

First, we saw how the practice of repeating the same prayer a certain number of times on a string of beads came into use. I explained this at our last meeting.*

Then we saw how devotions took their rise, sometimes through the pious meditations of Catholic hearts, and partly through

* See p. 198.

heresies bringing certain truths into prominent notice. And I explained to you how both these causes helped to give us the Rosary.

Then I explained to you how God prepared two instruments from whom we were to receive the Rosary, and I tried to show you how suitable they were for the work. These two instruments were our Blessed Lady and St. Dominic.

Now we have only to see how it actually came about that the Rosary was established.

I shall not be able to tell you anything very precise or exact about it. There are very many wonderful changes that have happened in the history of the world, of which we know nothing more than that they did occur—we do not know how; and the same thing is true of the history of the Church. Even the Incarnation of our Lord came about very silently, and but little is told about it. God does not choose to gratify our curiosity too much on these points. We are told enough to edify us, but not as much as we should like to know. The fulness of knowledge He keeps for the life to come.

What is quite certain is that our Lady made known the devotion of the Rosary to St. Dominic, and that he preached it to the people, and instituted a confraternity composed of those persons who promised to say it. The universal tradition of the Church teaches us this, and the Popes have affirmed it over and over again, against some few who cast doubts on the right of St. Dominic to this honour.

The Roman Breviary tells us that shortly after St. Dominic had instituted his Order of Friar Preachers, and while he was earnestly praying to the Blessed Virgin that she would help him to convert the heretics, she herself taught him the devotion of the Rosary, and bade him preach it to the people as a remedy against sin and error.

More than this is not known for certain, and so I cannot tell you in what year the institution of the Rosary took place, nor where it was that St. Dominic was praying when the Blessed Virgin appeared to him. It would be very interesting to us to know these particulars, but we must be content

with the outline of the story, which is as I have related to you.

We know, too, that St. Dominic preached the Rosary with great fervour, and established the confraternity, and that his Order followed his example. We also know that those southern provinces of France, in which St. Dominic preached, had been almost wholly perverted by the heretics when the Rosary was instituted ; whereas, from the time that it was established they began to return to the Catholic faith, and have ever since remained faithful to the Church. We need no better proof than this that the Rosary came from God, and that He has given it a supernatural power.

"That is all I have written, dear girls. I am afraid that it has been a little dry," I said, as I returned the paper to my pocket.

"Oh no!" exclaimed Alice and Mary, in a breath. "It is beautiful." And Alice added, "I shall like my Rosary much better for knowing all this."

Sister Teresa. And now let us salute the Queen of the Holy Rosary with a *Salve*

Regina, before we part for the evening: it is growing late, for I have kept you longer than usual.

VI.

The next time I met my young friends, Cicely was ready with a question for me to answer.

"Sister," she said, "yesterday I read in a prayer-book something about the Rosary scapular. What is that?"

"It is a scapular which the members of the Confraternity of the Rosary are allowed to wear," I replied.

"Is that all?" said Cicely, in a disappointed tone: "I thought from the way the book spoke about it, that it was something very particular."

"Well, my dear," I said, "perhaps it is something particular, and I will tell you all about it, if you will give me the opportunity to do so. But you are so quick, that you do not give me time to collect my thoughts.

"O sister," said the child penitently, "I

am so sorry! Pray forgive me for being in such a hurry."

"Let me see," I went on. "First of all, can any of you tell me what a scapular is?"

Mary then told us that a scapular is two pieces of stuff, joined together by strings, to hang round the neck.

"But why should that be called a scapular?" I asked.

No one had an answer to this question, so I was obliged to reply to it myself. "The word scapular comes from a Latin word, *scapulæ*, which means the shoulders. A scapular is a part of the habit of some religious orders, and it is so called because it hangs from the shoulders. It is not a tiny thing like the little scapulars that you are thinking of, Mary, but a broad piece of cloth hanging from the shoulders to the knees, or even lower."

"What religious orders wear the scapular?" asked Mary.

"A great many; more, indeed, than I shall be able to tell you. All who follow the rule of St. Benedict, such as the Benedictines and

the Cistercians use it ; many of those who follow the rule of St. Augustine, such as the Premonstratensians and the Dominicans ; the Carmelites, and the Franciscan nuns ; indeed nearly all the ancient orders wear it, and many of the modern ones also."

"As for the scapulars you were thinking of, Mary, when you told us that a scapular is two pieces of stuff hung round the neck, they are what I may call *miniature* scapulars, intended to represent the habit of some religious order. Thus the brown scapular represents the large brown scapular which forms part of the habit of the Carmelites ; the black scapular represents the habit of the Servites ; and the white scapular, with the red and blue cross, the habit of the Trinitarians."

"And what habit does the Rosary scapular represent, sister ?" asked Cicely.

"I am coming to that now," I answered. "The Rosary was revealed by the Blessed Virgin to St. Dominic, and his Order has ever since been entrusted by the Church with the charge of preaching the Rosary, and establishing the Confraternity of the Rosary. The

Rosary scapular is, of course, the habit of the order of St. Dominic. But I have been told that it is not the custom everywhere for members of the Rosary Confraternity to wear the white Dominican scapular. It is a privilege that was granted to Ireland only, on account of the great devotion of the Irish to the Rosary, and their love for the order of St. Dominic: and from Ireland it has passed into England, but I do not think that in other countries it is worn, except by members of the Third Order."

"Well, I *am* glad that I asked about the Rosary scapular," said Cicely, who, as an Irish girl, was naturally proud of anything that tended to the honour of her nation; "if I become a member of the Rosary Confraternity, I may wear it, may I not?"

"I suppose you may," I answered, "but I have not told you everything about the scapular yet. When you know all that I am going to tell you, I think that you will be still better pleased to be allowed to wear it."

"O sister, do tell us the rest," said several

of the girls. And so I went on with my story.

“You must know that at the beginning St. Dominic and his companions did not use the same habit which his Order now wears. St. Dominic was himself a regular canon of the cathedral of Osma, and he therefore wore the habit of the regular canons, which was a white tunic, and a rochet or surplice, with a black cloak over it. The first friars whom he received into his Order wore the same habit as himself.

“Now during these early days of the Order (it was in the year 1218) a celebrated French priest, named Reginald, a very learned and holy man and a most eloquent preacher, came to Rome, where St. Dominic was then living. This priest was anxious to enter a religious Order devoted to preaching, and no Order of that kind then existed, as far as he knew. He opened his mind on the subject to a certain cardinal, who told him that an Order such as he desired had just been established, and that the founder of it was then at Rome.

“Reginald at once hastened to St. Dominic,

and begged to be allowed to enter his Order. But before this could be done he fell ill, and seemed to be at the very point of death. St. Dominic was grieved at the thought of so soon losing one who had hardly yet become his child, and he prayed earnestly to God that his life might be spared.

“While the Saint was thus praying, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God and mistress of the world, appeared to Reginald, not in a dream but while he was awake and consumed with a burning fever, and he heard the Queen of Heaven say to him, ‘Ask of me what thou wilt, and I will give it thee.’ Now there appeared to him with the Blessed Virgin two maidens, and one of them said to him that he would do well to ask nothing, but to abandon himself to the will of the Queen of Mercies; and this he most readily consented to do.

“Then the Blessed Virgin anointed him with oil as a priest anoints the dying, and then she showed him a white scapular, such as the Dominicans now wear, and said to him, ‘Behold the habit of thy Order,’ and then

disappeared. At the same time he found himself quite cured of his sickness.

"The next day Reginald told the vision to St. Dominic, who from that time adopted the scapular as the chief part of the dress of his Order, understanding that it was the will of God that his friars should wear this habit."

Here I paused, and Alice said, "But, sister, is it not very strange that the Blessed Virgin should think about such a little thing as what dress people wear?"

"Nothing is little with God," I replied, "because nothing is really great. All things are small in comparison with His greatness. Yet you know God cares for us all."

"Yes, sister," persisted Alice, "but *dress* seems something so very little for God and the Blessed Virgin to care for."

"That is God's way always," I answered; "He looks for us to serve Him in little things, and we must look for Him in little things. It is one of His ways of teaching us to be humble. However, as regards the scapular, you will perhaps think it less unworthy of God's care when I tell you that it has a meaning."

"And what does it mean, sister?" asked Cicely.

"It signifies two things, innocence of life, and the protection of the Blessed Virgin. Remember what I told you about its form. It descends from the shoulders before and behind, and covers the whole body as with a shield or breastplate. Just so should innocence cover the whole of our being, that it may shield the soul from the assaults of the evil one. Its white colour is also an emblem of innocence and purity. White is also the colour of the Blessed Virgin, and the white scapular given by our Lady signifies that she will protect those who wear it. Cicely, do you still think that you should like to wear the white scapular of the Rosary?"

"Oh yes," replied the child, "I do not think that I shall be contented now until I have received it."

VII.

One day as I was walking on the sands, I met Mary coming towards me; she seemed

lost in thought, and did not see me until I spoke to her.

"You look as if you had the world on your shoulders, Mary," I said smiling; "what are you thinking about so seriously?"

She looked up a little abashed. "I am so glad to have met you, dear sister," she replied; "for indeed I have been puzzling over something very much: may I really tell you?"

Sister Teresa. You really may—that is, if you have leisure to turn back and walk with me as far as the point.

"Sister," she said, after we had taken a few steps in silence; "you know where I work that there are several girls much older than I am, and one who is called Sarah Matthews has a father who must be a very strange man; he has such notions about religion, that I often wonder if he has any religion at all."

Sister Teresa. How do you come to know this, Mary? Do you ever see him?

Mary. No, sister, I have never seen him; but Sarah tells us what he says. Now this

morning we were all speaking of an old man who had died suddenly, and how dreadful it is to die unprepared, when she said that perhaps it might not be so bad after all, as we might be very likely under a mistake.

Sister Teresa. What did you say in reply?

Mary. I said nothing, I felt so surprised; because you know, sister, what our Lord says about what He will do at the day of judgment with the sheep and the goats is so plain.

Sister Teresa. Did she say that people may hope to go to heaven without repenting of their sins?

Mary. Well, sister, it *did* just seem to come to that. She said her father laughed at the idea of there being any hell at all. He said that if God is so good as people say, He can never condemn any creature to hell fire for ever and ever; and, sister, I never thought of it so, and I feel puzzled.

Sister Teresa. What puzzles you, Mary?

The child hesitated a little. "I hardly know," she replied. "I have always thought of God as being a good Father, and full of

love; and now it seems very dreadful to think that He knows everything, and can do everything, and yet that He should make people who will have to suffer for all eternity."

Sister Teresa. It is a subject which has puzzled wiser heads than yours, Mary. It is one of the great mysteries which God Himself alone really understands, so how is it possible that a small mind can understand it?

Mary. What ought I to say, sister? I did so wish to know what to say in reply to Sarah, but I could not answer. You know, sister, she added, deprecatingly, it *does* seem hard for a Catholic child not to be able to take God's part.

Sister Teresa. The feeling is good and just, Mary; but I think you could scarcely satisfy persons who speak in that way, because, in truth, they do not *wish* to be satisfied. But as far as you are concerned, Mary, I believe I can satisfy *you*, and that is of most consequence just now.

A look of relief came over the girl's face, and I continued: "You must observe, Mary, that the Apostle's creed teaches us simply to

believe in 'everlasting life.' It is the concluding link of that beautiful chain which makes up the faith of a Christian. We begin with knowing the origin of our being, and we end by being taken into that for which it was created. We are taught, in the simplest form, the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and the share which each Divine person takes in the perfection of us, His creatures. If we believe and obey, the path is simple and straightforward.

Mary. That is, I suppose, what we children do. We don't think about hell because we think so much about God's love for us.

Sister Teresa. Well then, you know, as heresy springs up it is necessary for the Church to speak more plainly. People began to teach false doctrines, and the Church had to meet them by telling them the truth, and showing them the reverse of the picture, if they wandered away from God, and if they die in unrepented sin. The Athanasian creed enlarges upon the doctrine, and making use of our Lord's own words, explains to us that life everlasting is only for

the good, but that death everlasting will be the portion of the wicked. Now, Mary, this involves five distinct questions. 1. What *is* life everlasting? 2. What *is* everlasting death? 3. *Who* are the good? 4. *Who* are the wicked? and 5. Who it is that holds all in His hands, and decides these things for us with the perfection of justice. Well, dear, let us begin with that last question. *Who is God?* do you know? does *anybody* know? All we know is what He has revealed to us, so that we know just this: that He *is* God, and that He alone exists of Himself from everlasting to everlasting. He has told us that He is the author of our being, and the perfection of all being; that the happiness of His creatures consists in loving Him, and in being in His presence. That makes the happiness of the angels and saints in heaven, and even on earth it is the happiness of souls who are striving to make themselves worthy of their high destiny. All others are not, and never can be, happy.

Mary. Not people who are comfortable and have everything they want, sister?

Sister Teresa. I hardly expected that question of you, Mary. Ask yourself if you would be any happier with fine clothes and rich food, and servants to wait on you.

Mary coloured. "O sister, I did not mean such as me; I don't want for anything while I can earn my living."

Sister Teresa. And when are you most happy, Mary?

I was not quite prepared for her reply, for she looked up quickly and said, as the colour mantled all over her face, "When I am with you, sister."

"And why is that, my dear child?" I asked very tenderly, for the tone of her voice and the light in her eyes went to my heart.

Mary hesitated. "Because, sister," she replied in a low voice, "I love you, and you are very kind."

Sister Teresa. Then, dear child, it is love and gratitude in your own heart, and the presence of one who is kind to you, and who wishes to do you good, that makes you happy, is it not?

"I think so," said Mary, with tears in her eyes.

"I believe I may go a little further, Mary, and say that you are happy with me because your soul is freer, and feels, as it were, a little nearer to God, by what you learn when we are together. Shall I tell you something else? God is drawing your soul to Himself, and you don't as yet understand all about it; so you feel an attraction to anything that brings you nearer Him: you are longing for a clearer faith, and for something to love with all the passionate love of your heart. Well, Mary, that something is *God*, and *God only*."

Mary. Sister, you are the very first person who has ever found out that my heart is anything but a cold stone. I have often and often said to myself, "God only knows, for I do not, what it is I long for and do not seem to get; for it is not the things that appear to please other people."

Sister Teresa. All will come in good time, Mary. You *will* know, but we must not want to go faster than grace will allow us.

Now let us go back to what I was saying. The real and only happiness of creatures is the possession of God ; it is for this end they were created, and if they fail in attaining God they *must* be miserable, no matter what they have that is not Him. A holy man says to God, "*Where Thou art, there is heaven, and where Thou art not, there is both death and hell.*" And in another place he says, "*All things that seem to be ordained to man's solace in this world, if Thou be absent, are nothing worth, and cannot bring to man any true happiness. For Thou art the end, Lord, of all good things, the highness of life, and the profound wisdom of all things that are in heaven and in earth.*"*

Mary. I think I understand how it is that God has made us for Himself ; but then why does He let *any* one fall away when He can keep everything right by His almighty power ?

Sister Teresa. That is a question that it is wise not to try to fathom. And we must

* "Following of Christ," book iii., ch. 59.

never ask "*why* does not God do this or that?" who can answer us but God Himself? it is quite enough for us that He does, or does it not. It would not bring us nearer to God, Mary, if we knew the reason *why* of everything that happens upon earth or in heaven. Now let us go back to our first question—"Who is God?" The ideas we form about God must be more or less according to the things we see and know. We attach certain ideas to such words as merciful, loving, just, patient, glorious, and beautiful; and we attach these ideas to God as we should put colours in a picture, to make it stand out and take shape. So we put our unsimple thoughts in the place of the simplicity of God, and, consequently, we have but a very poor idea of Him in our minds. He is not merely *good*, He is *Goodness*; not beautiful, but *Beauty*, not merciful, but *Mercy*, not just but *Justice*. He is the perfection of all, and the outspringing source of all. Our ideas are most of all wide of the mark when we attribute to God the mere weakness of a virtue. This is how people

get wrong when they look upon God as simply a benevolent Being. Do you understand me?

"I think so," replied Mary. "You mean that God's goodness is something very different from the goodness of creatures."

Sister Teresa. Yes, and something much better, and which we cannot fully understand. Now let us get on to the next question—"What *is* Life Everlasting?" It is plain. God alone *Is*, therefore He Himself is Life Everlasting. For a creature to *be*, he must be united to God. He must be in God, and God must be in him. The creature's will must be formed into His will; it must be one with Him. *Then the soul possesses in itself* Life everlasting.

Mary. But, sister, can all that ever happen to such as me?

Sister Teresa. Not only can but *must*, Mary, for God is heaven, and heaven is God.

Mary. But can it happen on earth, sister?

Sister Teresa. Every minute of our lives should be bringing us nearer to it: it is the one thing needful, the only work of life.

Life and time were given us for it. If we work for anything else our time is wasted. And now we come to the next question—"What is everlasting death?"

Mary. Is it to lose God, sister?

Sister Teresa. Yes, my dear child. It is to be without God, to be incapable of loving, adoring, praising and serving Him. It is to be without grace, without light, without hope; to be left to self and the passions which have ruled the soul through life. It is to know that time has been given us to save our souls, and that it is gone, never to return. This is the second death. It needs no more than this for a soul to be in torment so long as it exists; and the soul is undying.

Mary. And that is hell, sister?

Sister Teresa. The soul without God, without grace, without love, without virtue, is a hell to itself, Mary. We need not go further to find it. Nevertheless, it has been revealed to us that there is, besides, a distinct place created for the purpose of being the kingdom of the devil and his fallen

angels; but we need not even think of it in connection with the miserable soul that is lost; wherever it may be without God, it is in hell.

Mary. Then, dear sister, the other two questions are easily answered—"Who are the good, and who are the wicked?" The good are those who die in the grace of God, the wicked those who die out of it.

Sister Teresa. You are quite right. You now see, when one great principle is quite clear, how all the rest follows.

Mary. Then all depends upon whether the soul is undying or not. It never can be reconciled to God after this life is ended.

Sister Teresa. The very fact of life being everlasting proves that, for those who do not attain to it, there must be everlasting death. The soul is created for eternity, and if eternity is not spent with God in heaven, it must be spent out of God, and in hell. There is no other eternity for creatures who have been redeemed.

Mary. Sister, John Matthews says that he

believes that *all* will get to heaven, only some will be punished first.

Sister Teresa. He does not take into consideration that after death there will be no more *time* for any soul. If a sinner dying out of the grace of God could by his own suffering, even for thousands of years, *merit* the pardon of God, and wash away his sins, the work of our Redemption would have been unnecessary. But you see, Mary, this is the value of *time*, that every moment of it can be made use of by every soul, in order that he may die in the grace and favour of God.

Mary. Then he says that nobody's sins deserve such a great punishment as an eternal one will be.

Sister Teresa. He says so, Mary, because he does not realise who God is. Now a sin is great in proportion to the greatness of the person against whom it is committed. A blow given in anger by a parent to a child is a very slight offence indeed, if any; but the same blow given by a child to a parent, is a very grievous one; if it is given by a

subject to a king, it is treason. What then would it be if given to God? Since His majesty is infinite, the sin committed against Him becomes infinite, and requires an infinite satisfaction. This must be obtained whilst there is time, or the offence merits infinite punishment.

Mary. And I suppose that is true of every mortal sin?

Sister Teresa. Yes; every mortal sin wilfully committed is committed against the infinite majesty of God, and also against infinite mercy. It is committed in the face of an infinite satisfaction, and therefore it falls under the weight of the judgment of infinite justice.

Mary. And yet, sister, how *easily* God pardons us!

Sister Teresa. You may well say so. He does indeed make it easy for us, and so it becomes the more inexcusable in those who are so foolish and self-willed and presumptuous as to disbelieve in His anger and judgment against hardened and impenitent sinners. The precious blood is very near to us now;

it can be had for a very small price ; only sorrow, only meek confession, only a little satisfaction. But after the soul is separated from the body, it will no longer be in a condition to fulfil the required terms.

Mary. I know it *is* so, but will you explain it, sister ?

Sister Teresa. The grace of God is necessary for the terms to be complied with, and a soul that has passed away in a state of mortal sin is without the grace of God, and could not, if it would, comply, and *would* not if it could. This is the most startling thought of all. It has left the body in a state of mortal enmity with God, and no amount of suffering can restore the friendship it had lost ; and this enmity will remain so long as an undying soul, united to an undying body, shall endure.

Mary. And that is hell ! Oh, it must indeed be hell, sister, not to *wish* to love God.

Sister Teresa. There is one more plain consideration, Mary, which I know you will see at once. A soul that has lost the grace

of God, who is really the enemy of God, could not be *happy* in the vision of God, even if it were possible for it to have it. The sight of God, which is the bliss of holy souls, would be the most tormenting hell of all to the soul that has ceased to love God. And rather than endure that Divine Presence, whom it has no longer the power of loving, it would plunge of its own accord into the very lowest hell.

Mary. That is very terrible, but I suppose it must be so, sister.

Sister Teresa. It is indeed. But there is this to be remembered, Mary. There will not be one soul in hell who might not have been in heaven, if it had made a right use of the grace which God had given it. God created us for Himself, and for eternal life. It is each one's own fault, if during this time of trial he chooses to please and worship himself, instead of submitting to the law of the Son of God ; and it will be each one's own fault if at the last he is shut out from everlasting life, and finds himself for ever in the darkness of eternal death, under the

cruel yoke of the prince of evil, and the eternal torments of the hell he has made for himself among them. And now we are just at home. I see you are happier for what you have learned. Good-bye, dear child, for the present, and pray for me.

God Only.



G O D O N L Y.



I.

IT was night. The autumn winds rose high, and moaned as they died amongst the forest trees. Fitful glimmers of moonlight shone through the scanty breaks in the heavy banks of clouds, and the yellow leaves were to be seen flying in all directions. Distant thunder, preceded by occasional flashes of lightning, filled the restless atmosphere, while every now and then a lull would follow, leaving the scene in melancholy silence.

The ancient Solitary looked up through the overhanging branches to the sky overhead, and a smile broke over his features—

“COME, MY BELOVED, COME!”

And deep silence followed as the unspoken

prayer arose, and was wafted by angels to the court of heaven. For to him the wind spoke of the Beloved, and the cloud and the moonlight and the long fitful shadows of the trees. Through them he looked at the Beloved, in them he saw the Beloved, and the voice of the Beloved alone, in their music, fell upon his ear.

And the heart of the Solitary rested like the reflection of a star trembling, but safe, on the ocean of Divine love.

Then the storm raged, and the forest trees were torn up by their roots. The lightning struck the noblest of them, and thunder shook them to their foundations. The earth trembled and gaped, and swallowed up the cities of men, and lurid fires lighted up the thunder clouds, which opened and fell in angry torrents, sweeping before them, in their fury, all that resisted their will.

But the hermit stirred not.

"The earth trembled and was moved!
But Thou, O Beloved, remainest unshaken
as Thy Throne! O God, Thou art unchange-
able, and Thy seat is in eternity. Speak,

yet again, in Thy creatures, O Beloved, and so shall my soul answer Thee."

For eighty autumns had come and gone, and the soul of the Solitary had learned to rise above the creature, and had found its rest in the Centre of all.

And it hung like a tender thought upon the heart of God alone.

And the storm passed away, and the day dawned again. The sun arose in his splendour, and laughed at the wrecks of the night. Creation stretched forth her hands, and lifted up her head at the warmth and light, and the sighing of the wind made an end, while the fresh perfume arose from the soil and spoke of gladness and enjoyment.

But the hermit arose to pray—

"I sought Him whom my soul loveth, I sought Him and found Him not; who shall give me wings like a dove that I may flee to Him and be at rest!

"Thou hast wounded my heart, O my love, Thou hast wounded my heart! Oh, when shall I live to be no longer my own, but Thine?"

For the sweetness of creation spoke to

the air amongst the forest trees with delicious song; they came at his call, and sang around his cell, when he blessed them, and they departed; but the turtle-dove flew round his head and nestled in his bosom.

“O Love of loves! O Sweetness of my heart! O Joy inexpressible. O Fire ever burning, never consuming. Thou hast ravished my heart, O God of my love, Thou hast ravished my heart alone! Take possession, O Beloved! As this creature hath found her home in me, so would I find my home in Thee! Draw me that I may come; speak to me that I may answer! Open to me, my God, open to me!”

For the heart of the holy man had broken with love, and his soul had fled to its home and its rest, and now lay in the sweet embrace of the Love of loves—in the bosom of God alone.

II.

“O bright and beautiful Cross! O faithful and true Cross! Never let me be separated

from thee, sweet hope of sorrowing souls !
dear bed of my Saviour ! On thee let me live,
by thee let me die ; Thou alone of all things
created art my own !

And she sang—

“ Dulce lignum, dulces clavos
Dulce pondus sustinet ! ”

Her fingers plied her needle by the feeble
light of the lamp,—but her heart was with
Mary at the foot of the Cross. The door was
opened gently and a fair girl, richly dressed,
entered the room.

“ Still working ? Can you not come to
Benediction for once ? ”

“ Dear Lilian, no. You must offer it for
me this time again.”

“ Ah, Agatha, how long is it to be so !
When will you speak out, and take your
proper place in the world ? ”

“ Am I not in my place, Lilian ? Where
else would you have me, since He has willed
it so. My desire is to live to God alone !
He grants it in this way, and the cross
which has brought it about is very precious
to me.”

The moon came from behind a cloud and flooded the bare attic with beauty.

"Will you not tell me all about it, Agatha?"

Agatha shook her head.

Lilian sighed as she took the hands of her humble friend, and the tears filled her eyes.

"I wish I could be like you, Agatha. It is heaven on earth to *me* to come here. Why is it so?"

"I do not know, Lilian, unless it is God speaking to your heart, telling you how unsatisfying everything is that is not Himself."

"We are both happy, Agatha, but not in the same way. I do not really know what it is makes *me* happy."

"Youth and health, and a natural power of enjoyment, and of making others happy, Lilian. These are natural gifts, and you cannot be too thankful for them."

"They don't make the heaven that *you* make, Agatha."

"It is only the presence of God that makes *heaven*, Lily. Perhaps it is the very absence

of all that makes up your life at home, that shows us God."

"But if you were gone what would this room be for me, my sweet sister? What makes it heaven to you?"

Agatha smiled and sang softly—

"Crux fidelis, inter omnes
Arbor una nobilis
Nulla silva talem profert
Fronde, flore, germine—
Dulce lignum, dulces clavos
Dulce pondus sustinet."

Lilian smiled and laid her fair cheek on her friend's shoulder when she began to sing. Agatha's voice was very rich and sweet, and it trembled as she concluded the verse.

"Is it *really* the Cross that makes this room heaven to you, Agatha?"

"It is *really* the Cross which has brought God to *me*, Lilian."

"You are speaking of Calvary!"

"True; that was the way long ago planned in eternity, Lilian. All our crosses are but poor little shadows, and are not worth speaking of by the side of that."

"Do you think your cross a little one, Agatha? False friends, injustice, cruelty, calumny! This bare room, this poor needle-work! I know this is your lot, although I don't know *all*. Surely you have found it hard to bear?"

Agatha coloured and was silent.

"I know that those you have loved have turned their backs upon you, and that you have been unjustly deprived of your inheritance—that"——

"Say no more, dear Lilian. I would rather bear any cross than allow you to think it specially hard."

Lilian was silent now that she had induced Agatha to speak.

"I have been thinking of the Mysteries of the Rosary to-day, Lilian. There are the mysteries of the Incarnation, the mysteries of the Passion, the mysteries of the Glorification of our dear Lord. It occurred to me in my prayer, that as He is our Head, and we may expect to see Him represented in His members, so our creation would seem to be pictured by His Incarnation, our

life on earth by His Passion, through which He entered into glory,—the glory we are hoping one day to share.”

“Must we all suffer so much, Agatha?” said Lilian sadly.

“If we would reign with Him, yes,” replied Agatha. “Because it is the only way,—*the only way*,—the way which has been trodden to perfection by God alone.”

“Is it not hard not to go to Benediction, dear, when you love our Lord so much?”

“Nothing is hard if it be His will. What are we here *for*, Lilian?” she suddenly exclaimed. “What good are we? Oh, there is no consolation for us in our nothingness, but the one consolation of doing or suffering His will. We *are* here to do His will, not our own. We are created for God alone; to be His creatures, His servants, His humble slaves; and He has exalted us to be His children, His *brides*! O Lilian, dear, what is life without God? What is anything that life or the world can give if He is not in it? O God, since I am *nothing*, and Thou art *all*, therefore will I utterly distrust and abandon myself. Thou

shalt be for me the true potter, and I will be the passive clay in Thy hands. Thine only, O God, Thine only!"

It was seldom that Agatha permitted herself to be moved in this manner, except when alone with God. Lilian, whose sensitive nature was quickly touched, turned pale, but the words sank deep into her heart.

"I am afraid I do not *think*," she said softly. "Everything, you know, is bright for me. I have had no crosses yet; none, at least, to speak about. I have not felt any need, everything comes, and I am satisfied."

Agatha looked lovingly into the sweet face, which was so self-reproachful in her admission of content.

"But if everything were to *go* instead of *coming*, Lilian, what then? would it not be well to be prepared?"

"Thinking would not prepare me, would it?"

"No, but constant acts of love and resignation would. And still more, a habit of thankfulness, which should live as it were in God's presence. He gives; He blesses; let

Him take if He will, *so* He blesses. But, O Lily! do not take His gifts and make idols of them in His place. We can do very well without *them*. We *cannot* do without *Him*."

"It does seem a shame when I think how little God is remembered in all that happens to us. And yet every good thing comes from Him."

"From Him *alone*, Lily. Keep on saying this in your heart from morning till night, and by degrees He will have His own rightful place there."

"Then I must go to Benediction without you, to-night, dear. I am going to Benediction to please God alone, to serve Him alone, to receive gifts from Him alone; and I leave you because it is His will you should serve Him alone, by giving up your will to Him alone—and I love you *because* you are His alone, dear, as I love no friend but my mother. And so I will go and pray for you, and you will pray for me, Agatha, that we may be always His alone."

"You are a sweet disciple, Lilian. How could I ever feel discontented when He gives

me such a consolation? Yes, dear, I will pray here, and you will pray before the Blessed Sacrament, and our prayers will be heard by God alone."

"And the holy angels will bring them back to us with a thousand blessings."

"They will."

"But how, dear?"

"Probably by the cross. '*Crux fidelis*,'" whispered Agatha.

III.

And Agatha prayed in her heart and said—

"Hail, rosy wounds of my Lord, inflicted for me! With what love were you endured by Him? What love do you deserve from me?"

It was true that Agatha was suffering from injustice; that being left an orphan she had been deprived of her inheritance, that she had in her possession papers which would have set her right if she had made use of them; but she did not—and why?

The story is too long to be detailed. There were two reasons which were ample,

in Agatha's eyes, for the resolution to which she had come of seeking no redress. One was that her fortune had gone to a married cousin who had been left a widow with an unprovided family; and the other was this, that the proofs of her innocence and claim having come into her hands long after she had learned the value of the great cross which had fallen upon her young life, she wished to correspond with the will of God, and to leave all judgment with Him. But only one point had made her hesitate. Agatha had always wished to be a nun—and she could not be a nun without bringing all her history to light—and as she had lived hidden, so she felt she must die hidden and despised, upon the cross which had been given her. Agatha's determination to live for God alone, and the grace which this determination had procured for her, had indeed converted her poor little dwelling into a holy cell, and her steadfast union with the cross of her Divine Master had made that little cell into a heaven of delights, which nothing on earth could replace.

And Lilian prayed before the Blessed Sacrament—

“My sweet Jesus, make me to be Thine alone! I offer myself now, as I have never done before, and all that I am or have to Thy heavenly will.

“I will never seek, O my God, any object for my affections out of Thee, since I see that all good is to be found in Thee alone.

“O my God, and all my good, in Thy will is life, in mine is death. Not my will be done, but Thine in earth as it is in heaven. Amen.”

And a great peace entered the soul of the child as thus she prayed to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The angels had brought it to her from the throne of God.

But the angels had brought the cross too.

Lilian was leaving the church when a poor woman, thinly clad, asked her for an alms. A sickly babe was wrapped up in her arms, and Lily stopped to look at it. She dropped the silver into the beggar's hand, and helped her, in her tender charity, to readjust the shawl over the moaning child.

Not many days after a note was brought to Agatha. It was from Lilian's mother; Lily lay at the point of death.

So Agatha nursed her—she had no fear of the dangerous malady—and Lilian recovered, but her face had lost all its beauty; for the smallpox had taken it away.

Poor Lily!

But Agatha watched her and helped her to prepare for the change. Was it necessary?

"Bring me my glass, dear, that I may see if the angels have brought the cross."

Even Agatha hesitated.

"You are so weak, dear, wait yet awhile."

But the disciple would not be behind the teacher, and she said—

"Agatha, I know it. God gave it, and He has taken it. What matters it when I am His alone!"

And a beautiful smile played round her mouth, and sparkled in her loving eyes as she held the mirror before her poor, wan, scarred face.

"It was something, Agatha—and yet after

all it was nothing. Why did our Lord let them mar His beautiful face, so that it was more disfigured than that of any man? Was it not for love of me? O my dear Lord, I give this little beauty back to Thee, for love of Thee. Thou, the Uncreated Beauty, didst give Thy created beauty, that I might give mine back with my whole heart to Thee. I give it Thee, for love of Thee,—Thee only, O my God.”

So Lilian arose from her sick-bed, and the cross had done its work. For though she was the light and brightness of her father's home, she no longer found her light and brightness therein. The world had lost its charm, and the things of time their value.

But she waited upon God, and she loved her friends and her home for His sake, and when He had ripened the blossom into fruit, He drew her to Himself, and she became a nun.

“Let neither death nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, ever be able to separate my soul from Thy love, O my

God ; my heart is ready, my heart is ready.
Let me run in Thy ways, and walk in Thy
paths.

“For the way of the Cross is pleasantness,
and the way of the Cross is peace.”

♦

THE END.



